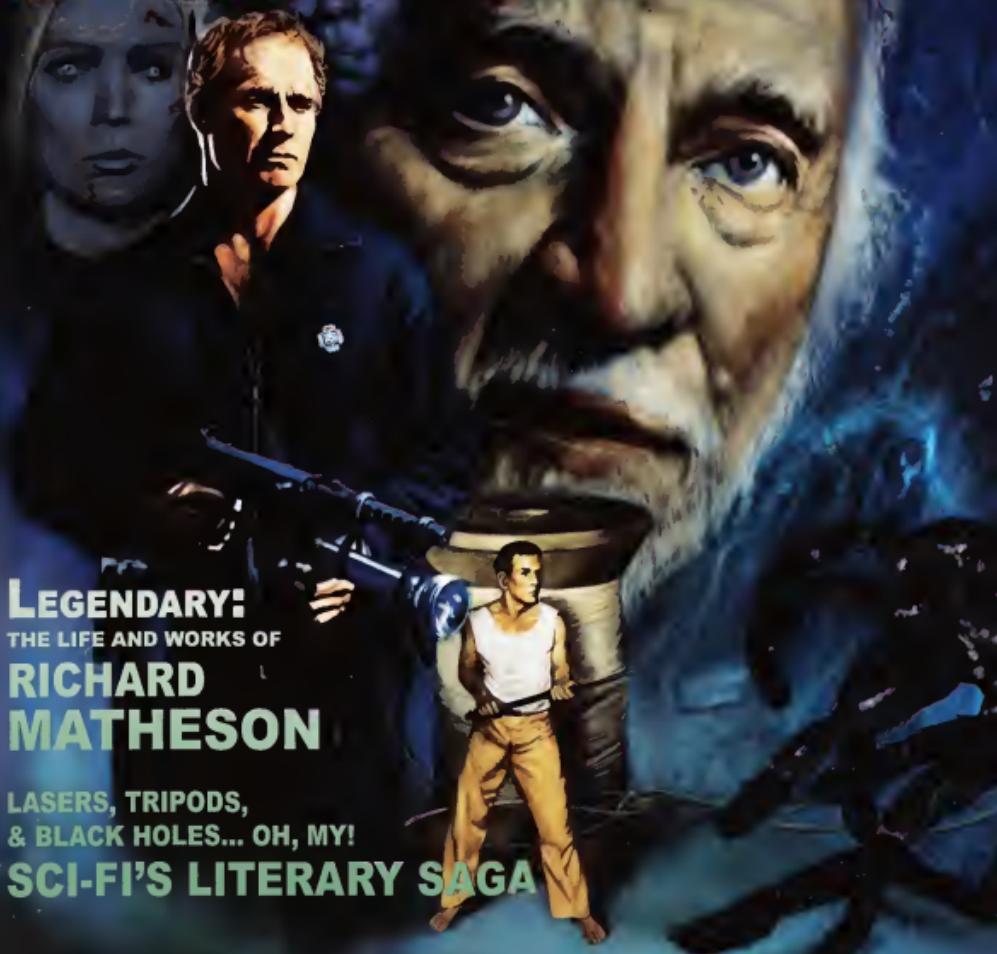


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#272 MAR/APR



LEGENDARY:
THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
**RICHARD
MATHESON**

LASERS, TRIPODS,
& BLACK HOLES... OH, MY!

SCI-FI'S LITERARY SAGA

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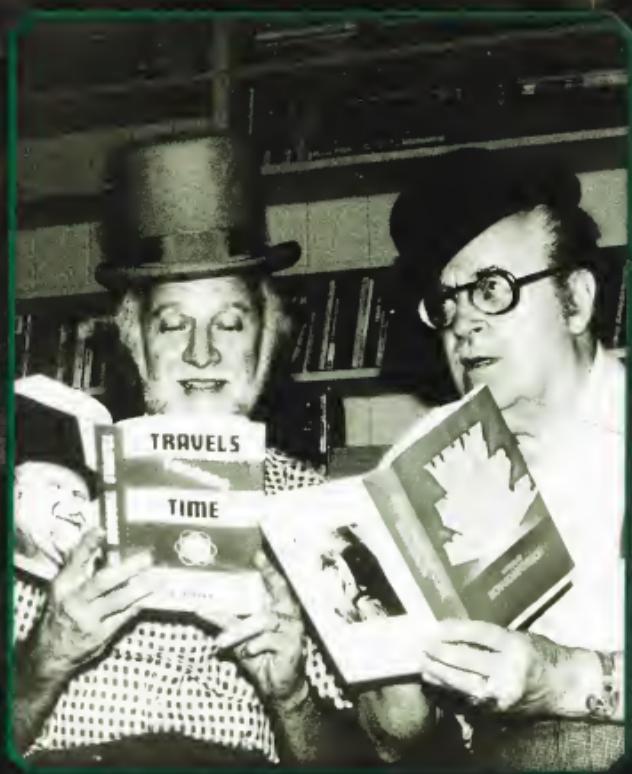
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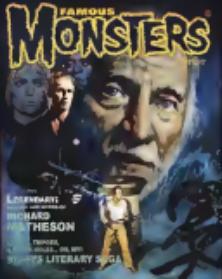
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SPEAKING OF MONSTERS®



"SCI-FI WAS MY HIGH"

-FORREST J ACKERMAN



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OPENING WOUNDS

The world would be a better place if everyone read Sci-Fi novels. In fact, I would say that education would be much more effective if we stopped shoving "classics" down the throats of teenagers. Let's be honest: making a class of fourteen year olds read ROMEO AND JULIET only guarantees one thing—that the vast majority of them will never read Shakespeare again... ever. Schools work so hard to push kids into math and science, yet give nothing to inspire them. Talk to any great particle physicist, engineer, or tech genius; it's a safe bet that their childhood bookshelf contained used and worn copies of Asimov's FOUNDATION or Herbert's DUNE.

That's the magic. Sci-Fi is the only genre that can capture the furthest reaches of our imaginations and focus them into making our reality more fantastic. Story after story exists of children growing up reading Sci-Fi adventures and going on to create great technological advancements that benefitted all mankind. The last story I heard about traditional literature inspiring something notable was when John Hinckley Jr. read CATCHER IN THE RYE and attempted to assassinate President Reagan.

Science Fiction books are also far more readable than many of their literary counterparts. Teaching Faulkner to a group of 16 year olds doesn't go well because Faulkner's prose is thick and requires a great deal of context. Had we read DUNE or STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, we could have had wonderful, relatable sociological discussions. Teach THE FOREVER WAR when talking about Vietnam. The book deals with complex theoretical physics and the alienation of soldiers returning home from a war in entertaining and understandable ways. When JURASSIC PARK came out, regular people were curious about chaos theory and gene/DNA manipulation. Folks were discussing scientific ethics and wondering about the possible applications of resurrecting extinct species. That is nothing short of astounding.

Ok, so I don't think we should stop teaching the "classics". But I do think that we'd be much better off if children were exposed to great Sci-Fi earlier in life. It sparks imagination and causes children to dream big—but in realistic ways. It often has a positive social message of responsibility and consequence. It is beautiful, powerful, and limitless. I hope that after exploring the works in this issue, you'll all feel the same way.

Ed Blair
Executive EDitor

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RICHARD MATHESON:

THE FM TRIBUTE



HE IS LEGEND



THE ASTONISHED MAN

RICHARD MATHESON'S FAMILY REMEMBERS
THE MAN BEHIND THE LEGEND

RICHARD CHRISTIAN MATHESON (SON)

For the first time in my life, I've written something I can't share with my father.

Were he here, I have no doubt he'd advise me that it needed editing; that I've overstated the virtues of its central figure. He was always right about such things.

But not this time.

My father and I were extremely close and, for a decade, as his health waned, I so dreaded his passing that I imagined I was living beside a dam with a slowly spreading crack, fearing when it broke, I'd be washed away. To prepare, I secretly began working on his eulogy, convinced that when the time came, I'd be unable to write something worthy of him.

I wrote about his love of delis, metaphysics, and Westerns. How he favored late night movies on TV, savoring obscure films and hissing tripe. I wrote about his dizzying imagination—equal parts child and literary lion. I described

his forgiving nature, his annoying refusal to gossip or be petty, his infatuation with stage magic, reverence for Mahler, generosity, wisdom, kindness, irreverent wit, loyalty. His belief that the best way for a man to dress up was for everything to be the same color: slacks, shirt, jacket, socks, shoes. I tried to convey his profound bond with the spiritual. How he played piano, wrote songs recorded by major artists, and even composed a symphony in his free time.

But despite countless pages, I'd barely made a dent; at best, silhouettes. Still, though they do him slight justice, they are a start.

My father's writing is what he's most known for: a literary voice of simplicity and truth, fevered with colossal invention. And though its lean ease appears effortless, it never was. He worked extraordinarily hard to be a fine writer, keeping disciplined hours,

rewriting with lapidary detail, refusing to submit anything until convinced he'd gotten the propulsive spell just right. His standards were so rigorous that, multiple times, he scrapped hundreds of pages of something new he'd written when he thought it fell short.

A key fact of his remarkable output is often overlooked: he wrote almost all of it on spec. Books, scripts, short stories, plays. No one *hired* him to write most. He didn't pitch them; he was given no option money. He simply plunged in with the meticulous abandon that distinguished his work. His greatest and most iconic works, from *THE SHRINKING MAN* and *I AM LEGEND* to *DUEL* and *HELL HOUSE* to every stunning short story, were written this way; borne of sheer risk.

He was a devoted husband to our mother Ruth Ann, who always knew he loved her, from the second they met—almost cinematically, on kismet sands in

Santa Monica in 1951—to the moment he passed. As my father's writing soared, he often said he'd have been unmoored and despairing without her, comically envisioning a tragic, alternate version of his life, adrift, miserably, living at the YMCA, staring into space, his world a glum pinprick.

He grew up in an immigrant Norwegian family in Brooklyn, with mother Fanny, father Bertolf, brother Robert, and sister Gladys; his imagination far exceeding their quiet, guard-ed life. He was introspective, an insatiable reader who began to write very young, penning his first novel, *THE YEARS STOOD STILL*—which featured global intrigue, sinister intent, and a surreal twist (presaging work to come)—when he was a worldly fourteen.

Bertolf died a year later and, though my father never spoke much of it, it caused his further retreat into writing. In his little room, with losses and fantasies swirling, he wrote about what he felt, what he imagined, what he predicted in the world... what he feared in his own. In his earliest work, amid wonder, was frequent melancholia; the wounded ensnared in miraculous impossibility. In these pained fictions can be found the metaphors of his young, broken heart.

My father could almost always see to the core of others in a blink, undistracted by their presented selves. With a sleuth's calm, he listened, and asked polite questions, until they wandered into the light, often relieved to finally be seen. That genuine curiosity didn't judge, his empathy for human drama boundless. As a writer, his respect for mazes of the psyche deepened his characters, made them real. His insights into the mad and mercurial also aided him in surviving the dorsal-finned tides of Hollywood.

To this day, I remain fascinated by what was his almost pre-cognitive knack for sensing what the next, emerging, and most notable thing would be in the world. Unlike a Nostradamus flash, it was an intuitive assembly of what seemed random, in our world, into patterns that often came true, as if he saw around

corners. Perhaps if one listens to the pulse of the universe, as he always did, much is revealed.

Growing up, my father always treated me like an adult, and we often took excursions into the occult and peculiar. He introduced me to astrologers and psychics when I was just a kid, which I loved—their readings a mystic glimpse into my fate. When I was twelve, learning to play drums, he took me to see double-bass drum maestro Louis Bellson, at a black nightclub in a bad neighborhood... another time to watch REM-fast Buddy Rich in a smoke-hazed jazz dive, an illicit cave of cool I was too young to be around, thank god.

There were safaris to book stores, magic shops, archery ranges. We played drums and piano together, built a go-cart, golfed. Went to a million double features, every genre. When it was still illegal in Los Angeles, we slipped into the home of a renowned acupuncturist, who did his covert pin-cushioning without license. In a bedroom, we were swabbed and needled, left prone and alone in the dimness to quietly chat—our version of a father-son moment.

Actually, our whole life together was a father-son moment.

We talked all the time about a million things and could

naturally read one another. We saw stories the same way, were drawn to the same twists and ironies, and trusted each other in every way. He once even had our bio-rhythms analyzed, and we hummed at exactly the same frequency. I have no idea what that actually means, but I believe it.

After we'd sold scripts together and were developing more, we decided



Father and son, both brilliant authors in their own right, shared a deep bond and constantly supported one another's artistic endeavors.





to start our production company, MATHESON ENTERTAINMENT, lining up projects to write and produce. But for all its public announcement, it was just a continuation of the conversation we'd been having forever—we'd simply added business cards.

Brilliance is a superlative stripped of meaning these days; baubles are sainted, trifles ordained. The real thing is *rare*. My father was a writer without peer, a voice so singular that the finest authors of our time, from Ray Bradbury to Stephen King, celebrated him with praise reserved for icons. Ray called him "one of the most important writers of this century."

Steep competition... until you read his luminous work.

But that was only part of his richness. For many, he'll always be the best friend they ever had; steadfast, giving. When he was your friend, he had faith in you, through thick and thin; and though a writer expert in arousing dread, he eased the fears others had in life. After decades of writing darker material, he was called to the spiritual. A self-taught scholar about

life-after-death, he regarded bodies as nothing more than cars of flesh to tour around in, hosting our spirits on this plane. As his own weakened, that belief sustained his spirits. He also knew the sublime awaited him, and in his novel *WHAT DREAMS MAY COME*, the afterlife he describes is eloquent reassurance to many.

For some time, I have believed in life-after-death... not because of any religious conviction, of which my family had none, but because he made such a damned persuasive argument for it. Leaving the funeral of the great author Robert Bloch, my father turned to me and said, "Wouldn't it be interesting if when people pass, they don't really die—they just move to another town?" That's how he looked at it: those who have passed are near, the meridian between them and us illusion. As I mourn his loss, that belief sustains my spirits.

In the haunting film *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* (which is based on his novel *BID TIME RETURN*), my father had a small speaking role in which his most memorable line of dialogue is "Astonishing." In the

credits, he's listed as "The Astonished Man". That was him: fascinated by all things, big and small; always seeing the exceptional in the ordinary.

As I imagine him, recalling a thousand details, I miss his twinkling, conspiratorial smile and easy laugh; the half-mad but entirely rational way his mind worked. I also miss writing things together and talking about the endless divinities and absurdities of existence. And I will always miss making him laugh, catching him by surprise. He was a sucker for trapdoor endings.

The dirty trick of life is that those we love get taken from us. Amid such robberies, my father lived with magnificence, walking on fire and changing the world. He was the most stellar writer and man I've ever known; my greatest friend, my mentor, my hero. Wherever he may be, enjoying the glorious sights, I believe we'll meet again. And when we do, after I remind him how dearly I love him and missed him, I figure we'll start talking about this and that, and time will fly.

RUTH ANN MATHESON (WIFE)



*R*ich and I met in 1951.

He had just arrived in California, and like me, he was at the beach on his day off. He was tall, handsome, and blond, with green eyes and a funny blue cap that said "Brooklyn Boy's Camp". He offered me five dollars to go in the water, and I said no because I couldn't swim. As we started to talk, he said he worked at Douglas Aircraft cutting out wings, and I told him I worked as an x-ray technician at Santa Monica hospital. We agreed to see each other the following Wednesday, but he lost my number.

The next week, we met again, and although we both lived in rooms and had no car or money, it didn't matter. He was exciting, well-read, had an extraordinary mind that seemed unlimited, and opened the doors for me to worlds I didn't know existed. I was conservative and he wasn't, and though some of his ideas were innovative for me, I had fallen in love and told all the people at work I'd met the man I was going to marry.

I was charmed by Richard Matheson sixty-one years ago.

He proposed the following month, and we were married a year later in Tijuana. Now, looking back, I've never met another man like him. He was so extraordinarily sensitive and gifted, and his sense of life and humor were the finest teachers I'd ever had. From him, I learned more than anybody and was eager to discover as he shared his wisdom with me. Ours was a one-of-a-kind love story.



*H*LI MARIE MATHESON (DAUGHTER)

After returning from a weekend that honored my dad's movie *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*, I have again been reminded that there are two worlds my father lived in: the professional and the personal. In the former, he was and forever shall be an amazing literary voice that so many are still enthralled by as they read or view his many works. But it is the latter in which I knew him best—and miss him the most. I miss the father who brought me books every week to encourage my lifelong interest in reading and took me to concerts to let me share and learn about the part of him that loved classical music—a gift that I am forever grateful for, as my love of the music we experienced together has been a constant—and often a comfort—in my life today.

I miss the Dad who made me laugh when he told the same silly stories over and over, or sat with me in the stable one chilly winter night as I cried over a painful breakup in college and told me I would find someone much better—someone who deserved the gifts I had to give. He was the amazing man who wrote so many incredible short stories, but always found the time (albeit sometimes grudgingly) to take me or my sister to school because we had missed the school bus yet again. He created movies that thrilled and chilled, but told some of his best stories by firelight when we all went camping. And no matter how busy he was, he always tried to help me with algebra (which was a losing proposition; I never could figure out what the value of that damn "x" was, much to his frustration).

I miss you, Dad, and wish I could tell you I love you just once more, but I know you are somewhere amazing. I look forward to the day I can see you again, give you a big hug, and say thank you for your many, many gifts.



*B*ETTINA MAYBERRY (DAUGHTER)

One of my fondest memories of Dad comes from the period when we lived in Woodland Hills, from 1958 to 1965. Our house was a pretty, two-story Cape Cod up on a hill that had a great view of the San Fernando Valley. Downstairs there was a music room with two baby grand pianos. From about 1961 to 1963, Dad and his friend Jerry Sohl—a fellow fantasy writer—would play the most amazing duets. Even though I was in love with rock & roll and the Beatles, when dad and Jerry Sohl would play, it was like a siren's song that I couldn't resist. Little did I realize that they were instilling in me a lifelong love of classical music. Dad, like many creative people, was talented in more than one area. Mom tells me that he loved both music and writing and in college was the music critic for his college paper at Columbia University in Missouri. He also co-wrote a musical while there. In the end, he chose a journalism major and became a writer. Lucky us! Dad's major focus was his writing, but over the years he continued to compose music and even sold songs to Perry Como and Bob Hope that he co-wrote with his friend Nick Perito. To this day, whenever I hear a classical piano piece, it takes me back to those magical moments of my childhood. Thanks, Dad.





MARIEL COOKSEY

(GRANDDAUGHTER)

*T*here is a house, beyond reckoning and indeterminable rays of darkness; beyond the reaches of god and man and radio waves, and every word ever spoken. This is where my grandfather lives.

What do you see when you close your eyes? I would ask him.

I see worlds, he would reply, without opening his eyes. I imagine his darkness, breathing deeply as though he could raise his dreamt empires to the ground with a sigh. Immortal wars raging on beneath his eyelids, of men and beasts—tests of faith and the perils of death. Universes born on his breath, stars colliding in his heart, planets orbiting his lungs. He became the worlds he created.

Grandpa, what do you see when you close your eyes?

I see people, he would say.

I could see their faces: the imperfection of strangers radiating through his vision as though he could see all their stories, all their thoughts and hopes in one perfect light, birthing them and unraveling them as he sat watching the news.

By the time I was old enough to know my grandfather, he was older yet, and the biggest betrayal to his mind became his body; his genius was bound by his flesh, hidden by silence and painful movements. It was only in glimpses I saw him, what he really was. I could see the young man, full of ideas, vigor, and determination; jumping into the recesses of his mind and retrieving fantastical brilliance, illuminating and seducing the imagination. I imagined him, 20 something years old, dancing around his Brooklyn apartment, vibrant and adventurous, sinking between worlds as he tapped away on his typewriter. I imagined him at the beach in California, seeing my grandmother for the first time, struck by her beauty enough to boldly attempt (and fail) at getting her attention. I imagined him struck with awe seeing New York for the first time, his eyes alit with all the multitudinous possibilities of life and everything, humming with the excitement of would-bees and could-bees and what-ifs.

Even in the most difficult periods of his early life, he never stopped wondering and exploring. Down in the trenches in the gloom of World War II, he stayed awake into the small hours of the morning reading Bram Stoker's DRACULA, ensnared by the velvety horrors within the pages. I can picture him down there with a flashlight, eagerly turning the pages, too excited to sleep. It is a lesson my grandpa often taught in his own stories: that there is hope and beauty in even the darkest and foulest places of the earth; and if, god forbid, we reach those places, we do not have to give up who we are and what we love.

I've read in many articles that my grandfather was a connoisseur of the "supernormal" versus the "supernatural", basing most if not all of his stories on real life. For me, there is hardly a distinction between the two, as the waking world is just as strange and unusual as any worlds we could think up; but to say that my grandfather was a strict realist is not entirely true, because for me he was a man of great faith and spirituality.

About a year ago we spoke of death, a topic I had fervently meditated on: what it meant to die, what happened to us when we died, why we are alive at all, et cetera. He told me that he was not afraid to die, and that he knew, somewhere in the ether of the afterlife, there was a house—a house which he would go to and wait for his beloved Miss Ruth to join him. And when the time came, they would live there together, Ruth tending to the garden, him writing his books; an immortal, eternal paradise. I believe with all my heart that he is there. Sitting in the back room, ticking away at his typewriter, scripting the world one letter at a time, and waiting for everyone else to come home.

Mary Oliver once wrote, "Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift." My grandfather showed me the immeasurable gift of darkness, and what astounding feats of light you can pull from it. He inspired his readers, his fans, his family, friends, and me to dig deep, to reach down into those dark places and pull something out, something beautiful, or perhaps something monstrous which we, in turn, must learn a lesson from. He saw a magic and depth in everyday, tedious things that I can only dream of realising; he had a true gift.

I miss him every day, and he is alive in my thoughts, my dreams, and most vividly in my imaginings. I am so proud of everything he accomplished, who he was, and the lasting impact he had on this world. He is my inspiration, my hero, but most importantly, my papa. I know that he will continue to inspire generations of dreamers to come.





LISA LELIS (GRANDDAUGHTER)

The table is very old and made of wood. I'm told, it was used as a church pew before my grandparents bought it. My grandparents have now owned this table for many decades. It's a dark, unsteady table with grooves and imperfections. This was the table I shared with my grandfather. My grandmother used the table to showcase her shiny decorative bowls, or to serve family and friends. In time, the table became a nightly meeting place for my grandfather and me. Just the two of us...our ritual... our time together. Sitting at the table, night after night, until the early morning.

This room is one of my favorite places in this old ranch house. The room is very warm, as it usually is at this time of night. The fireplace is burning, my grandmother is cooking dinner, and the black labs are sleeping on their soft beds. I am exhausted after a long day at school and work, but my place at the long, dark wood church table is cleared for me. My grandfather is sitting on his side of the table in his chair. It didn't matter that all of the chairs were equally uncomfortable—night after night, he would sit in the same chair. His chair faced the fireplace behind me.

My grandfather appears to have been anticipating my arrival. "Oh, hi, Lise," he says. This is his nickname for me. This is where my grandfather and I reconnect. I pull out a chair and grab one of my schoolbooks and place it on the table, along with a few pens and some paper. The large lamp dangling above the table is dimly glaring, as always... I glance across the table and see my grandfather. Everything is where it should be... as it should be.

His white captain's hat on his head, slightly tilted to prevent the glare from the lamp: check.

His blue jumper outfit: check.

3x5 inch green cards: check.

Sharpened No. 2 pencils: check.

A cup of coffee: check.

Chocolate chip cookies: check.

We sit in silence. My grandfather is deep in thought, but occasionally escapes his imagination to ask me if I need more space at the table. He also reminds me to "take a break every twenty minutes." He praises me for working hard and tells me to "just keep at it." I look up at the clock behind my grandfather. It is quickly heading towards midnight. The clock is an old woman who laughs when you pull her string. I start to feel hungry and reach for one of my grandfather's cookies. He slides the entire plate my way.

I take a few moments and stare at my grandfather's busy fingers. Writing... always writing. I am fascinated by his ability to write for hours without stopping. His fingers never seem to get tired. He is wearing out one pencil and moving on to his next victim. He organizes his green 3x5 cards. There must be hundreds of cards. He pushes some cards to the side and ignores them. He sips his coffee slowly. My grandfather moves slowly, does most things slowly... the only thing about him that does not seem to move slowly is his mind. I tell myself to focus and get back to my work. My grandfather lifts his head and looks at me, but does not say a word. There are few words between us during our nightly ritual.

We've been sitting at the table for hours. I look up at the clock and notice that it's almost one-thirty in the morning. I look across the table to see the top of my grandfather's white captain hat. He is deep in thought. I can hear my grandmother walking down the hall. She checks on us every night. "You guys still alive?" she would ask. "Yes," we would reply in unison. My grandfather and I would share a look. We knew what my grandmother was really asking, and we revolted on a nightly basis. My grandmother would sweep around the table, looking over our shoulders. This was my grandmother's way of letting us know it was time to clean up the table... but we never did.

I look up again. It is now three in the morning. I give in. I sigh. My grandfather looks up from his side of the table. "Are we done for tonight?" I nod and tell him I'm off to bed and that I'll see him tomorrow. He sets down his pencil, organizes his 3x5 inch cards, and stands up. I say, "G'night, Gramps." I walk through the kitchen as my grandfather walks down the hall to his back bedroom, where my grandmother is up watching a movie.

The table is left with our mess. My grandmother will tell us to clean it up in the morning, and we will... And we will meet again that night at our table.

It has been a few months now. Grandpa, you are gone. The table is still there. I am still here. The table is clean. Empty. Lonely. No mess.



The granddaughters Lisa, Valerie, and Emily; daughter Bettina.

V ALERIE BRENNAN (GRANDDAUGHTER)

I don't really remember my grandfather being particularly talkative, but that may have just been because our family was so full of outspoken (some would call us loud) women and he wouldn't have been able to get a word in if he tried. But he was always present during our family gatherings, usually in his favorite chair, with the rest of us piled onto the family couch in front of the fire; listening to all our stories, taking it all in, and offering a chuckle, here and there.

When he did make an effort to be heard above the rest, it was usually to add a joke or an insightful comment. Never much, but always right on point, simple, and with impeccable timing. One of the best memories that I have of him was a single comment that he made to me when I was pregnant with my first child. He simply looked at me, patted my arm, and said, "You're going to be a wonderful mother."

It was how he said things, so matter-of-factly, that made you believe it, even if you may have doubted it previously. Whether it was a dream of being a prima ballerina, a business woman, a social worker, or simply a good mother, he was always there to offer a smile and encouragement. That is how he will be remembered.



The Matheson Clan (L-R): Richard, Bettina, Ali, Mariel, Diana, Richard Christian, & Ruth.

E MILY FARAG (GRANDDAUGHTER)

Things I will never forget about my grandpa:

He believed in astrology and reincarnation. As a teenager growing up in Ohio (i.e.: the "Bible Belt"), I thought that was so cool. He simplified an astrological chart that was done for me, and he was very encouraging about my strengths. I still think about it when I need a boost. His praise was very succinct, which makes it easy to remember in times of need.

In 2010, he traveled from L.A. to San Francisco (with the help of other family members) to my wedding. This was a huge commitment, as his health was in decline. They rode up in an RV because flying would have been too difficult. He and my grandmother always brought red rose bouquets for my sister and me after our ballet recitals. To this day, the red rose is still my favorite flower. I only had roses at my wedding, and my daughter's middle name is Rose.

I will never forget his work ethic. What a drive and passion for writing! The twinkle in his eye when he explained to me the joy of coming up with the perfect ending to a story. He enjoyed family gatherings even though they were female-dominated, boisterous events. He was willing to go along with almost any conversation as the pack of women usually decided what to talk about. He only left the room (out of frustration) once—when we were vividly discussing childbirth. He declared something about how there was not a man in the world who could participate in that discussion. It still makes me smile.

How serene he was even though he was so close to death.

LEGENDARY

THE ENDURING IMPACT OF RICHARD MATHESON'S I AM LEGEND

BY DAVID WEINER

Ray Bradbury called Richard Matheson "one of the most important writers of the twentieth century," and he wasn't kidding. Published in 1954 to mixed reviews, Matheson's *I AM LEGEND* has graduated to become one of the most influential Sci-Fi novels ever written, with today's zombie, vampire, and post-apocalyptic genre tales—from *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* and *THE STAND* to *28 DAYS LATER*, *WORLD WAR Z*, and *THE WALKING DEAD*—owing a huge debt of gratitude to Matheson's brainchild.

The dystopian story follows Robert Neville, the apparent last man on Earth due to his immunity to a global pandemic that has transformed humanity into hordes of bloodthirsty vampires. Scavenging for food and supplies by day and barricading himself in at night from the deadly fiends, he desperately seeks out other survivors while trying to determine the cause of the plague—and maybe even

find a cure. A former family man, Neville's daughter was claimed by the disease, and he was forced to kill his wife after she was infected and rose again as a vampire. Now, after years of lonely existence, devoid of human contact, this shell of a man has become a depressed alcoholic. He's losing his mind. His outlook brightens upon discovering the companionship of a dog, only to be subsequently devastated when the pooch succumbs to the infection.

Then Ruth comes along: an almost impossible human appearing to Neville after years of solitude. The day walker's explanations for her survival and behavior raise his suspicions, but defy any established logic that she could be a vampire. But soon, Ruth is revealed to be a spy for the nocturnal creatures, and Neville learns that they are a much more intelligent race than he could have ever imagined, evolving into a new species that can withstand the daylight with the aid of medicine—and who are attempting to rebuild society. With the last remaining human—Neville—marauding and killing large numbers of vampires on a daily basis, who is the true monster now?

Incorporating traditional notions of vampire lore such as wooden stakes, garlic, crucifixes, mirror reflections, and deadly sunlight, *I AM LEGEND* also rethinks and expands on preconceived ideas of vampirism while tackling the theme of man's growing isolation amid the post-war boom of the '50s, flavored with a generous helping of religion, God's wrath, and a topical Red Scare analogy. Matheson takes the idea of the lone wolf protagonist and turns it on its head, illuminating the fine line between hero and villain: it's all a matter of perspective, and Neville is no hero—he's actually an egocentric monster who spends his days indiscriminately wiping out large swaths of a developing species. Rather than the vampires being monsters of legend, events have come "full circle," and

Neville himself is the stuff of legends, the bogeyman, "a new superstition" to the evolution of humanity.



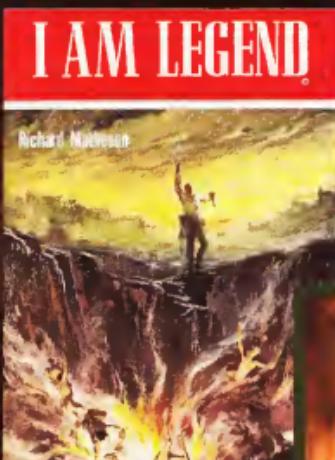
THE MOVIE ADAPTATIONS

THE LAST MAN ON EARTH

Horror staple Vincent Price headlines this low-budget Italian production with a script written by Matheson (who later dropped his name from the credits, choosing his pen name Logan Swanson instead after it was rewritten by other writers). Renamed Dr. Robert Morgan, Price's character holes up in the 'burbs by night and kills weak, unintelligent vampires by day following a worldwide bacterial plague. Immune due to a vampire bat bite years earlier, Morgan also confronts Ruth the spy, then ironically meets a cruel demise in the same way that he dispatches of the vampire "freaks" surrounding him. Although the film has become a bit of a cult favorite, Matheson said publicly that he didn't care for it and, although a fan of Price, felt that actor was miscast.



Great Sci-Fi holds a mirror up to current events while being veiled by the genre, much like STAR TREK did on television in the '60s, and 1971's OMEGA MAN does just this—albeit it is thinly veiled, at best. Matheson was more forgiving on this cinematic take on his novel, since it was so far removed from his original story.



"**FULL CIRCLE. A NEW TERROR
BORN IN DEATH, A NEW
SUPERSTITION ENTERING
THE UNASSAILABLE FORTRESS
OF FOREVER. I AM LEGEND."**

I AM LEGEND (2007)

After years of languishing in development hell (with Arnold Schwarzenegger originally championing the project at one point with Ridley Scott attached to direct), I AM LEGEND stars Will Smith trying to do justice to Matheson's work. Moving the action to a New York City overrun by vegetation and wildlife, the setting is believable and the set-pieces genuinely cool and frightening, but the film ultimately fails on a variety of levels, no thanks in part to unconvincing, overly CGI'd vampire hordes and a bleak, reworked ending—the original final moments found Smith's Neville facing the vampires as they break into his stronghold to rescue one of their own, mirroring the burgeoning humanity of the adversaries in the book. But the ending did not test well with audiences, and was changed to have Neville sacrifice himself in a literal blaze of glory, diluting the tale's ultimate message.



THE OMEGA MAN (1971)

Sporting an array of comfy track suits and a clenched jaw, Charlton Heston is the last man on Earth, battling hordes of nocturnal albino mutants—dubbed "The Family"—transformed by biological warfare. THE OMEGA MAN turned Matheson's premise into a topical tale, tackling many of the major themes of the 1960s, from religious cults, Woodstock, and the counter-culture movement to race relations with a touch of blaxploitation, largely influenced by the Manson Family murders and Helter Skelter.



I AM OMEGA (2007)

A knockoff production designed to capitalize on the big-budget Will Smith adaptation, *I AM OMEGA* was a straight-to-video release from the indie studio The Asylum with Mark Dacascos, named Renchard, battling hordes of cannibalistic, zombie-like creatures in a post-apocalyptic Los Angeles setting. An unofficial adaptation of Matheson's work, the title dodges direct comparison by obviously combining *THE OMEGA MAN* with *I AM LEGEND*. (See how they did that?) For those not in the know, The Asylum regularly commits cinematic crimes against poor, unassuming video consumers, churning out "mockbusters" to cash in on Hollywood's blockbusters, with titles including *TRANSMORPHERS*, *SNAKES ON A TRAIN*, *THE DAY THE EARTH STOPPED*, and *AGE OF THE HOBBITS*, several of which have earned legal action from major studios.

THE IMPACT AND LEGACY OF LEGEND

I AM LEGEND was really the first Sci-Fi tale to incorporate mutant hordes with a post-apocalyptic scenario. More than half a century later, an endless list of major and minor movies, TV shows, and novels owe many of their plots and premise to the influence of Matheson's story. Here are a handful that have become classics in their own right, but that you may not have considered to be derivative of Matheson's material in one way or another—until now.



NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

The director of this grandfather of the zombie film genre, George A. Romero, directly credits Matheson's work as the inspiration for his shuffling undead masterwork, with his subsequent entries incorporating even more of Matheson's ideas—from survivors holed up in the vacant shopping mall landscape of *DAWN OF THE DEAD* to the twisted scientific experiments in the underground bunker of *DAY OF THE DEAD*.



28 DAYS LATER

With our protagonist waking up in a hospital to find the streets of London completely deserted, only to discover that the UK, if not the whole world, has been decimated by a rage virus—with hordes of infected roaming and running for the jugular—Danny Boyle's zombie game-changer still owes aplenty to Matheson's original tale.



THE WALKING DEAD

While the zombie pandemic has become a genre unto itself, elements of THE WALKING DEAD perfectly embody the horrific situations Neville faces in LEGEND, from an inexplicable disease transforming the population into the undead to principal characters forced to kill their loved ones after they've been afflicted.



STEPHEN KING'S THE STAND & MORE

Stephen King has credited Matheson as a huge influence on his own work, even dedicating his apocalyptic tech thriller *CELL* to the late author. King's stories that draw on Matheson's writing include the vampire tale *SALEM'S LOT* (including that memorably creepy scene in which a vampirized Danny Glick scrapes at Mark's window) and *THE STAND*, which follows the remaining denizens of a post-apocalyptic landscape after a devastating bioweapon flu nicknamed "Captain Trips" wipes out the majority of the world's population.



RICHARD MATHESON'S FANTASTIC HUMANITY

By Peter Martin

"Today mother let me off the chain a little so I could look out the window."

Richard Matheson changed my life before I even knew his name. Two of the episodes he wrote for THE TWILIGHT ZONE ("Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" and "The Invaders") captured my heart and gut for reasons I did not fully understand as a child. When I was a little older, I was chilled by the passage above from his story "Born of Man and Woman", which I read in THE SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME, VOLUME I in the early 1970s. My friends and I, in our own fumbling attempts at fiction, tried to replicate the cadence of the little boy whose parents locked him in the cellar, but somehow this Matheson fellow

had captured an elusive tone that we could not hope to imitate. Learning that the story was, in fact, Matheson's first published effort only made us groan in jealousy.

It was only much later, after I'd been exposed to more of Matheson's work through his screenplays (the adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe that he penned for Roger Corman), television shows (DUEL, THE NIGHT STALKER, TRILOGY OF TERROR), and original fiction (THE SHRINKING MAN, I AM LEGEND, BID TIME RETURN, WHAT DREAMS MAY COME), that I realized the key to his success was that he fused wild, outlandish, unbelievable situations with characters who were all too human.

"Born of Man and Woman", published in the third issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1950 when Matheson was just 24, kicked off his development as a writer during a decade that offered diverse opportunities for young scribes with enterprising spirits who could dream up a constant stream of original stories. Genre magazines began to flourish, and Gold Medal Books established a market for paperback originals. After writing dozens of clever, thoughtful short tales, such as "Witch War" (deadly teen girls), "Dress of White Silk" (a frightening young girl), and "Mad House" (a scary story about a writer with anger issues), Matheson turned his attention to a longer, daring work.

Startling in its narrative force, I AM LEGEND (published as a paperback original by Gold

Medal Books—cover price: 25 cents) examines a man who believes that he is the only survivor of a plague that has turned everyone else on Earth into a vampiric creature. The premise alone is sufficient to explain why it has been adapted into multiple feature films, but somewhat understandably, none of the screen versions has successfully translated the elusive personality of Robert Neville into the compelling character he is on the page. Midway through the story, Matheson slides in this devastating indictment of Neville: "In a world of monotonous horror there could be no salvation in wild dreaming. Horror he had adjusted to. But monotony was the greater obstacle, and he realized it now, understood it at long last." Neville already believes that he knows himself and his own motives—all that remained was for him to figure out what he needed to do. "Understanding it seemed to give him a sort of quiet peace," Matheson writes, "a sense of having spread all the cards on his mental table, examined them, and settled conclusively on the desired hand."

What's really happened, though, is that Neville has come to a false conclusion about himself and about his place in a post-apocalyptic world he has inadvertently helped to create. It would be easy enough to present Neville as an arrogant, highly intelligent scientist as in the 1971 and 2007 film versions, yet Matheson believed in Neville as a flawed human being, someone who was not willfully blind to his own shortcomings, but overcome by grief and the exhaustion of living a solitary, often terrifying existence. Neville holds on dearly to his own humanity, despite his flaws, and Matheson's portrayal of his plight makes him a character who earns sympathy. (The 1964 film version with Vincent Price, THE LAST MAN ON



EARTH, on which Matheson received co-writing credit, comes closest to the original story's understanding of the character.)

The humanity in I AM LEGEND ties together with a thread established in his earlier stories—"Mad House", especially, feels like a dry run, as the main character unwittingly is responsible for his own undoing—and comes to even greater fruition in Matheson's second novel, THE SHRINKING MAN. The 1957 film version, directed by Jack Arnold and adapted by Matheson himself, has created indelible images and is a fantastically moving picture, but frankly, the novel doubles the large impact.

Matheson begins the novel with his hapless hero Scott Carey trapped in the cellar of his home, bedeviled by a spider, and well-aware that he has only six days left before he shrinks out of existence. It's a concept that is simultaneously ridiculous and terrifying. While the movie version wisely showcases the action set pieces—the cat, the spider—the novel explores the mind of a man and his desperate determination to live, no matter how small he shrinks. He hates himself for his shortcomings, for the harsh manner in which he often treated his devoted wife, for the frustration he expressed toward his young daughter, for the unbridled lust he felt for a teenage babysitter, for his sexual yearning for a carnival little person. In all of these passages, what comes through once again is Matheson's fellow feeling for his creation. Like Robert Neville, Scott Carey is a seriously flawed man, but he refuses to give in to the darkness that threatens to overwhelm him. At one point, after he has won another temporary respite from the menacing black widow spider in his cellar, Matheson describes Carey's state of mind:

"What he wanted to know was this: Was he a separate, meaningful person; was he an individual? Did he matter? Was it enough just to survive? He didn't know; he didn't know. It might be that he was a man and trying to face reality."

Matheson's sense of humanity continued to manifest itself in his scripts for television and movies. In effect, his screenplay for THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN served as a "calling card," demonstrating his ability to deliver snappy dialogue and compelling characters built upon very strong narrative foundations, while also allowing space for filmmakers and actors to do good work. By 1959, Matheson was sufficiently established in television to be invited to write for Rod Serling's new show THE TWILIGHT ZONE, and he ended up writing 16 episodes for the groundbreaking series. Of these, "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" is the most unsettling for anyone with a fear of flying. As quoted in Marc Scott Zicree's THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION, Matheson said the idea came to him when he was sitting on a plane. His original short story painted his hero as a man with suicidal impulses. Matheson recognized that "you couldn't do that on television," though the character is scarcely less frantic in the episode, especially as portrayed intensely by William Shatner. "The Invaders" is somewhat similar in its set-up, in that "a woman who's been alone for many years," as the opening narration describes her, can't initially believe what she's seeing: a flying saucer has landed on her roof, out of which emerge two tiny, but very lethal, creatures. Played by Agnes Moorhead, the woman has no dialogue, but her instinct for survival is extremely strong. These two episodes pit individuals against strange and unusual

foes; what they have in common is that both the airline passenger and the isolated woman have a fierce desire to live, come what may. (Matheson, it should be noted, was not satisfied with "The Invaders" as aired, feeling that it was "incredibly slow-moving" and the creatures were "about as frightening as Peter Rabbit".)

Matheson's screen work in the 1960s was again marked by sophistication, class, and fellow feeling, whether he was re-imagining Edgar Allan Poe for producer/director Roger Corman (HOUSE OF USHER, PIT AND THE PENDULUM, THE RAVEN), splitting Captain Kirk



TOP: The cover of THE SHRINKING MAN, before some marketing team decided to add the word "incredible" to the title. ABOVE: Vincent Price scours the remnants of civilization in THE LAST MAN ON EARTH. RIGHT: William Shatner battles the "Thing on the Wing" during one of his trips to THE TWILIGHT ZONE.





to remove himself from the dangerous situation in which he's been trapped; the last thing on his mind is repaying the truck driver's evil with his own.

Carl Kolchak, THE NIGHT STALKER's unlikely hero, is a newspaper reporter living in modern-day Las Vegas, but his confrontational, impolite manner is straight out of the 1950s. Based on a novel by Jeffrey Grant Rice, Matheson constructed a detective story that kept the spotlight on the marvelously cranky Kolchak, performed with gusto by veteran character actor Darren McGavin. His deductive abilities, Matheson suggested, were born from his personality quirks, which enabled him to look askance at accepted wisdom and keep an open mind about the possibility that a vampire was stalking Sin City. Even more than stopping the vampire from killing again, one senses that Kolchak wants someone to believe him.

Perhaps the fullest expression of Matheson's humanity came in his 1978 book *WHAT DREAMS MAY COME*, which distilled years of careful thought and meticulous research on life, death, and the realms beyond into a heart-wrenching, though eventually uplifting, love story between a man and a woman. Matheson, who often featured an isolated protagonist in his stories, turned things around: here, the key characters are surrounded by individuals willing to help them confront and overcome the fear of death, and the biggest challenge is

learning to accept that help. It's the most compassionate, humane plea of all, crying out, in essence, "You are not alone! Be not afraid!"

Although he remained busy with film and television projects throughout the following decades, Matheson's prolific creativity flowered fully with a dazzling succession of novels. To pick just one, 2002's *HUNTED PAST REASON* demonstrates as well as any of his later fiction how adeptly Matheson could spin a basic premise into an unforgettable thriller. Two men set off on a backpacking trip; one is a neophyte, a successful writer researching his next novel, the other is a down-on-his-luck actor who is vastly more experienced in the wilderness but harbors an unpleasant reservoir of resentment and bitterness. Their temperaments clash, and their differing views of life ultimately flare up into a white-hot, life-threatening scenario. Even as the action and the language turns raw, disquieting, and surprisingly profane, Matheson cultivates sympathy—or at least empathy—for both characters, and questions how they got to that particular turning point in their lives.

Richard Matheson never stopped creating stories with the potential to bring out the best (and the worst) in his characters. Rather remarkably, the individuals who people his stories always came fully to life as flesh and blood creatures who make their own choices, whether the author likes their decisions or not. That's another mark of Richard Matheson's fantastic humanity.



Matheson proved adept at adopting the works of other authors for the screen, as he did with Edgar Allan Poe's stories for producer and friend Roger Corman. Of Matheson, Corman says, "Richard Matheson was a close friend and the best screenwriter I ever worked with. I always shot his first draft."

into two halves ("The Enemy Within", STAR TREK), or adapting thrilling novels into notable films (DIE! DIE! MY DARLING, THE DEVIL RIDES OUT). In the 1970s, his teleplays for DUEL and THE NIGHT STALKER were outstanding examples of his distinctive, ultimately benevolent view of mankind's foibles. In DUEL, all salesman David Mann (Dennis Weaver) wants to do is get to his next stop on a business trip. Harking back to other TWILIGHT ZONE-era Matheson protagonists—the story was inspired by a real-life 1963 incident experienced by Matheson—Mann cannot wrap his mind around the idea that a stranger driving an 18-wheel truck actually wants to do him harm. As the nightmare unfolds, Mann's feverish hope is to avoid confrontation,

IN The (TWILIGHT) ZONE

BY DON VAUGHAN

THE TWILIGHT ZONE (Ed. Note: see FM 259) is arguably the best-remembered anthology television series of the 1960s, and with good reason. Under creator Rod Serling's stewardship, the show brought viewers five glorious seasons of thought-provoking stories by some of the era's most talented fantasy and science fiction writers.

Among them: Richard Matheson.

Indeed, Matheson was one of a small cadre of writers who worked closely with Serling during THE TWILIGHT ZONE's formative first season to establish the general tone and direction of the series. Also on hand was Matheson's longtime friend, Charles Beaumont. Later, they would be joined by other California-based writers such as Jerry Sohl, George Clayton Johnson, Earl Hamner, and Ray Bradbury. "Richard Matheson was a very loving, very gentle man," Hamner, now 90, recalled to FM. "And, of course, just incredibly talented. He had gifts in every aspect of the fantasy/science fiction field."

Matheson and Beaumont, who shared an agent, were invited, along with a handful of other writers, to a screening of the pilot episode of THE TWILIGHT ZONE, the Serling-scripted "Where Is Everybody?". The screening was an attempt to lure some of the more prominent names in fantasy and science fiction following a disastrous "open call" for scripts that resulted in more than 14,000 submissions but not a single purchase. Recalled Matheson in RICHARD MATHESON'S THE TWILIGHT ZONE SCRIPTS (Cemetery Dance), "I believe Rod had in mind—as I believe Gene Roddenberry had in mind later with STAR TREK—to use all the top writers in the fantasy and science field to write for the show. And in both cases, as I understand it, they didn't have much success in that area. There were only a handful of people who ever worked out."

Serling was contractually obligated to write 80 percent of the scripts for THE TWILIGHT ZONE, with the remaining 20 percent to be penned by others. Most of Serling's scripts were original stories, but he didn't shy away from adapting the works of others, including Matheson. In fact, Serling adapted two Matheson short stories—"Disappearing Act" (retitled "And When the Sky Was Opened") and "Third From the Sun"—during the show's first season.

"He may have bought the stories before I even saw the pilot," Matheson recalled in THE TWILIGHT ZONE SCRIPTS. "But I think that if I had known I was going to be working on the show, I would have tried to do the scripts myself. At the time [Serling] was starting out, I knew he was reading through a massive amount of material. He must have picked out those two stories. I'm just guessing, but maybe that was why Chuck Beaumont and I were called in to look at the pilot. To see if we could do original scripts as well."

The answer, of course, was a resounding yes. Though THE TWILIGHT ZONE was some of Matheson's first work for television (he also wrote for CHEYENNE, HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL, and BOURBON STREET BEAT, among other shows), he was no stranger to screenwriting, having scripted the film adaptation of his novel THE SHRINKING MAN—filmed as THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN.

Matheson's first original script for THE TWILIGHT ZONE was "The Last Flight," which premiered on February 5, 1960. Rather than submit an outline, as was the process, he approached producer Buck Houghton and story editor Del Reisman with a one-sentence premise: "A World War I pilot gets lost and lands at a modern SAC base." The idea was immediately approved and Matheson was off and running.



"The Last Flight" is about a British flying ace named William Decker (Kenneth Haigh) who, in an act of cowardice, flees a dogfight, leaving a fellow pilot to certain death. Decker flies into a mysterious white cloud and lands at a modern airfield in France. He later learns that the pilot he left behind survived, became a World War II hero, and is scheduled to inspect the modern airfield that very day. Realizing he has been given a second chance, Decker takes to his plane and flies back into the mysterious cloud. We later learn that Decker's comrade survived the dogfight during World War I because Decker sacrificed his own life to save him.

"The Last Flight" was the first of 14 original scripts Matheson wrote for *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* over five seasons. He penned three episodes for Season One, two for Season Two, three for Season Three, two for Season Four, and four for Season Five. In addition to "The Last Flight", Matheson's scripts for Season One include "A World of Difference" and "A World of His Own", both of which demonstrate his clever approach to storytelling. "A World of Difference" stars Howard Duff as Arthur Curtis, a businessman who suddenly finds that his life has become a movie—literally. His familiar office is a set, and everyone refers to him as Jerry Raigan, the actor who plays Arthur Curtis. As Curtis's "real" life slowly disappears, he desperately pleads with the Forces That Be not to leave him stranded in his lonely, new existence. Slowly the sounds of movie-making give way, and Curtis finds himself back in familiar surroundings.

"A World of His Own" concerns playwright Gregory West (Keenan Wynn), who discovers that he can make anything real simply by describing it into his dictation machine. To make the object disappear, all he has to do is destroy the tape. Despite several amazing demonstrations, West's wife, Victoria, refuses to believe and threatens to have her husband committed. West reveals a length of tape that describes Mary, which she angrily throws into the fireplace, causing her to disappear. Gregory frantically begins to describe Mary on another piece of tape, then reconsiders and begins describing a much more compatible wife instead.

Season Two featured "Nick of Time", starring William Shatner as a man who becomes obsessed with a devilish fortune-telling machine. It was the first of two fine Matheson episodes to feature Shatner, the other being the classic "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet". The other Season Two episode penned by Matheson was "The Invaders", which stars Agnes Moorehead as a woman whose backwoods home is invaded by tiny aliens.

Matheson's contributions to Season Three were the comedic "Once Upon A Time", starring Buster Keaton; "Little Girl Lost", a gripping tale about a little girl who becomes trapped between dimensions (a theme appropriated in *Tobe Hooper's POLTERGEIST*); and "Young Man's Fancy", the story of a man who can't escape his nostalgia for the past.

Matheson was dedicated to the notion that his TZ episodes would never be what he referred to as "punchline" episodes. His goal was to make the journey as rich and enthralling as the finale. He never wanted his episodes to hang on a single note, but instead provide an emotional depth from start to finish.



Season Four saw two hour-long scripts by Matheson: "Mute", an adaptation of his short story by the same title, and "Death Ship", yet another "everyone is dead but doesn't know it yet" episode that is notable for using the flying saucer from *FORBIDDEN PLANET*. (The miniature was also used in "The Invaders" and "Third From the Sun".)

Season Five brings *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* to a close with some of Matheson's best contributions to the series: "Night Call", based on his short story "Long Distance Call"; "Spur of the Moment"; "Steel", based on Matheson's short story by the same title; and "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet".

Matheson was a thinking-man's writer who loved testing the psychological limits of his characters. Isolation, for example, is the prominent theme of "The Invaders", in which the protagonist, living alone in a ramshackle cabin, must single-handedly deal with a life-threatening situation far beyond her understanding. Paranoia is another favorite Matheson trope, captured best in "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet", which concerns a man just released from a mental institution who believes he sees a dangerous gremlin on the wing of an airplane. He knows that what he is seeing is real, but no one believes him because of his questionable mental state.

Interestingly, some of Matheson's most memorable *TWILIGHT ZONE* scripts were inspired by real-life experiences. "Little Girl Lost", for example, came to Matheson after his young daughter rolled under her bed, making it difficult to locate her. And the basic premise for "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" came to Matheson during a routine airplane flight.

"Richard had an individual touch," observes Hamner, who

cites "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" as his favorite Matheson episode: "Not many people understood the show's limits and its requirements, but Richard knew, and he stayed within those boundaries. But at the same time, he enlarged everything he touched."

The series finale of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* took place on June 19, 1964 and Matheson moved on to other things. His script for "The Doll", which had been purchased but not produced during the series' final season, was published in *Twilight Zone Magazine* and later adapted for Steven Spielberg's anthology series *AMAZING STORIES*. In the early 1970s, Matheson penned two scripts for Serling's new anthology series, *ROD SERLING'S NIGHT GALLERY*: "The Funeral" and "Big Surprise". It was a valiant attempt at recreating the magic of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE*, but Serling's oversight was far more limited, and the series never really clicked with viewers. As a result, *NIGHT GALLERY* was canceled after just three hit-or-miss seasons.

Nearly two decades after *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* ended, Matheson returned for *TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE*, which featured remakes of three classic *TWILIGHT ZONE* episodes ("Kick The Can", "It's A Good Life", and "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet") and one original story written by John Landis. Matheson was brought in to pen the three adaptations, which proved to be a mixed bag for the veteran scribe. He questioned the decision to remake three extremely well-known episodes rather than feature all original material, and had much of his work rewritten by others. This is especially true of the script for "Kick The Can", which was dramatically revised by Melissa Mathison, best known



While his work for the TZ will always be remembered, he enjoyed his work with creator Rod Serling so much that he was happy to collaborate with him yet again on Serling's NIGHT GALLERY.

as the screenwriter for E.T.: THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL. "I didn't care for it," Matheson said of "Kick the Can". "It had the gloss and it had the look, but it was a bit too soft for my taste. My script had a little more bite to it."

TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE wasn't Matheson's final foray into Serling's mad universe. A revival of the show in 1985 featured a single story by Matheson, "Button; Button", based on his story by the same title. Matheson was extremely displeased with the adaptation ("I thought they did an abominable job," he commented in THE TWILIGHT ZONE SCRIPTS) and demanded that the producers use his pseudonym—Logan Swanson—in the credits.

Though he penned just 14 original scripts for THE TWILIGHT ZONE, Richard Matheson's contributions to the series cannot be overstated. He brought a unique and unbridled originality to the series and is responsible for many of the show's best-remembered episodes. In fact, it wouldn't be inaccurate to say that without Matheson's involvement, THE TWILIGHT ZONE might never have achieved the cult status it enjoys today.

MATHESON EPISODE ORIGINAL AIR DATES

- And When the Sky Was Opened (script by Rod Serling based on Matheson's short story "Disappearing Act") (December 11, 1959)
- Third From the Sun (script by Rod Serling, based on Matheson's short story) (January 8, 1960)
- The Last Flight (February 5, 1960)
- A World of Difference (March 11, 1960)
- A World of His Own (July 1, 1960)
- Nick of Time (November 18, 1960)
- The Invaders (January 27, 1961)
- Once Upon A Time (December 15, 1961)
- Little Girl Lost (March 16, 1962)
- Young Man's Fancy (May 11, 1962)
- Mute (January 31, 1963)
- Death Ship (February 7, 1963)
- Steel (October 4, 1963)
- Nightmare at 20,000 Feet (October 11, 1963)
- Night Call (February 7, 1964)
- Spur of the Moment (February 21, 1964)



SIX-GUN GOLD: THE WESTERNS OF RICHARD MATHESON

by Don Vaughan

Richard Matheson was known primarily as a fantasy and science fiction writer. It was a label he accepted, but in truth, Matheson was that rare breed of scribe who refused to be constrained by genre. He wrote a lot of science fiction and fantasy, but he also wrote mainstream novels such as *THE BEARDED WARRIOR*, thrillers such as *SOMEONE IS BLEEDING*, love stories, and even non-fiction.

The genre for which Matheson is perhaps least known today is the western. The veteran wordsmith had a fondness for the old west and began selling western stories to the pulps, and to mainstream magazines such as *Bluebook*, at the beginning of his writing career. Six of Matheson's short stories were collected in *BY THE GUN* (1994). He also wrote four novels: *JOURNAL OF THE GUN YEARS* (1991), *THE GUN FIGHT* (1993), *SHADOW ON THE SUN* (1994), and the *MEMOIRS OF WILD BILL HICKOK* (1996).

The stories featured in *BY THE GUN* explore several themes popular in western literature, but typically with a twist. "Gunsight", for example, is about a sheriff whose eyesight is failing. Forced into a showdown against a known killer, he honed his other senses to even the odds. "Go West, Young Man" concerns a city boy so enamored with gunfighters like John Wesley Hardin that he practices his draw to perfection, then heads west to make a name for himself—with horrific consequences.

Matheson's short stories are wonderful, even if you don't especially like westerns. They're full of riveting

characters and historical detail, evidence of Matheson's genuine fondness for the genre. It's unsurprising, then, that some of Matheson's earliest television work was for series such as *HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL*, *CHEYENNE*, and *WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE*.

As good as Matheson's short stories are, his western novels are even better. The long form gives his tales more room to develop and his characters a chance to grow, with exhilarating results. *THE GUN FIGHT*, for example, is a rather traditional tale of a retired gunfighter named John Benton who is forced into a confrontation with a hot-headed young man named Robby Coles, who erroneously believes Benton has eyes for his girl. Required to defend his honor, Coles challenges Benton to a gunfight, which Benton tries desperately to avoid. But despite his best efforts, Benton must pick up his guns once more to defend himself against a challenger young enough to be his son.

Two of Matheson's western novels—*JOURNAL OF THE GUN YEARS* and *THE MEMOIRS OF WILD BILL HICKOK*—are biographies of a sort. *JOURNAL OF THE GUN YEARS* explores the life of a fictional lawman named Clay Halser, whose exploits have made him both famous and infamous. The newspapers back east have rewritten his story to the point of fiction, resulting in constant run-ins with gunfighters looking to make a name for themselves by gunning down the famed lawman. Only Halser's journal contains the true story of the man behind the myth. Said Stephen King of *JOURNAL OF THE GUN*

YEARS: "Matheson excels at the depiction of one man alone, locked in a desperate struggle against a force or forces bigger than himself." *THE MEMOIRS OF WILD BILL HICKOK* is a fictionalized account of the real-life lawman and sharpshooter. It purports to tell Hickok's life story from his perspective, reported in journal excerpts that end two days before his assassination. Much of the story involves actual events in Hickok's life, with Matheson using the journal format to explore the famed gunman's emotional and psychological state over the course of his life.

Perhaps the most unusual of Matheson's westerns is *SHADOW ON THE SUN*, a novel that is both a western and a horror story, based on ancient Native American legend. It involves an Indian agent named Billjohn Finley, who establishes a truce between the U.S. government and a band of Apache in southwest Arizona. Everything is fine until a couple of white men turn up dead and the townspeople immediately blame the local Indians. But the truth is much worse: a hellish demon stalks the town, and only Finley and a local shaman can halt its deadly rampage.

Richard Matheson's legacy remains firmly rooted in his fantasy work, but enthusiastic fans are encouraged to find and read his western tales. They may not be as well known as more seminal works such as *THE SHRINKING MAN* or *I AM LEGEND*, but they're equally well-written and just as much fun. For Matheson completists, they're a must.

THE METAPHYSICAL MATHESON

BY NANETTE LAVOIE-VAUGHAN

Richard Matheson was a visionary writer who, from the beginnings of his career, incorporated into his works the concepts of reality and time that are now recognized by the scientific world and metaphysical community. As a practitioner of Therapeutic Touch, a form of energy healing, I have long embraced these concepts and as a reader, was drawn to Matheson's works. He is best known as a science fiction and fantasy novelist, but he had a life-long fascination with

after death and reincarnation are just slices of the pie. Life is a huge wheel, and it goes around and around, and life after death is a segment of that. It comes down to spiritual growth. I think that we keep coming back until we learn what we need to learn, until we get it right." In 1999, he recorded an audio presentation, "Reality", on his observations of the metaphysical realities of life. In his presentation Matheson discusses the mind-body connection, sleep as an

short stories and progressing throughout his many novels. As early as the 1950s, the concepts of telepathy, the afterlife, reincarnation, and reality appeared in his short fiction. For example, "Little Girl Lost" (1953) tells the story of a family who hears a little girl's voice but can't find her. When a neighbor comes to help, they realize an entrance to a third and fourth dimension has opened under the sofa.

"The Man Who Made the World" (1953) is the tale of a man referred to as a psychiatrist because he claims to have made the world, which will end when he dies. He is killed in an accident leaving the psychiatrist's office, and everything disappears but the doctor. In a surprise ending, it is revealed that the story is an allegory for God punishing his son for not picking up his toys! "Deadline" (1959) features a man seeking a doctor's help after having been born on New Year's Day and is now aging rapidly. The man dies at midnight on the next New Year's Eve just as the doctor's pregnant wife gives birth to a baby boy. "Mute" (1962) tells the story of a couple who adopts a mute boy only

"To me, life after death and reincarnation are just slices of the pie... I think that we keep coming back until we learn what we need to learn, until we get it right."

the metaphysical and paranormal realms. Over a 60 year period he was an avid student, reading hundreds of books on the subject, using his research as the basis for short stories, novels, and his lesser known non-fiction works.

In an interview he gave to the *New York Times* in 1994, Matheson said, "I don't even think of life after death. To me, life

aspect of reality, near-death experiences, the afterlife, reincarnation, karma, and the purpose of life. He summed up his personal philosophy as "To die is nothing. To live is everything," which he used as a quote in HUNTED PAST REASON.

One can trace the path of Matheson's interest in metaphysics and his growing knowledge from his early career writing



While on the surface,
Matheson's supernatural tales
are classic "Ghost Stories", the
books are also windows into his
view about the spiritual nature
of man and evil being carried
forward across time. **HELL**
HOUSE (above and far right)
horrifyingly epitomizes the
tenet that "Evil never dies."

to find out he was raised to be telepathic. Matheson's novels **A STIR OF ECHOES**, **HELL HOUSE**, **BID TIME RETURN** (adapted for film as **SOMEWHERE IN TIME**), and **WHAT DREAMS MAY COME** are built upon metaphysical concepts. **A STIR OF ECHOES** follows the protagonist's "descent into hell" after his brain is opened to the full power of the universe and other dimensions during a party game in which he is hypnotized. The novel explores the laws of thought and consciousness and ponders whether man is capable of handling an open mind. **HELL HOUSE**, on the surface, is a haunted house story. But it quickly becomes apparent that the suicides and deaths of those who spend the night in the house are being caused by the ghosts of the previous owners and their victims. So begins the story of how actions taken in life can influence the afterlife and beyond, sometimes with scary and evil consequences.

BID TIME RETURN, a time travel romance, recounts a love story that

RICHARD MATHESON A STIR OF ECHOES

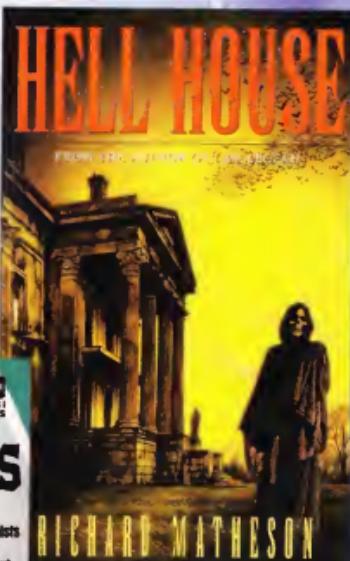


Out of the
nightmare mists
of darkness,
the pale silent
wraiths come
in a macabre
dream of
terror....

26

crosses barriers as a man and a woman from different centuries fall in love. They are able to transcend the issue of time as reality and create a lasting relationship. Matheson says in the introduction to the book that writing this novel was one of those times he "lived" the story: "I did this at such length and with such total concentration that there were fleeting moments where I actually felt it taking place, sensing that time for those few moments became fluid."

The novel **WHAT DREAMS MAY COME** is the true embodiment of Matheson's philosophy, and one of my



RICHARD MATHESON

New York Times bestselling author of *I Am Legend*



HUNTED PAST REASON



RICHARD MATHESON
Bestselling author of HELL HOUSE

Bid Time Return



WHAT DREAMS MAY COME and **BID TIME RETURN** (adopted for the screen as **SOMEWHERE IN TIME**) showed the versatility of Matheson's style. While the stories are filled with chilling toles of the unreal, at their core they are romances. The main characters are motivated by love and will let neither death nor decades separate them from their soulmates.

favorite Matheson works. The dust jacket synopsis says it all: "The end is just the beginning. A love that transcends heaven and hell. What happens to us when we die?" Matheson uncharacteristically added a prologue: "Because its subject is survival after death, it is essential that you realize, before reading the story, that only one aspect of it is fictional: the characters and their relationships. With few exceptions, every other detail is derived exclusively from research." In a 2004 interview for *Filmfax*, Matheson said **WHAT DREAMS MAY COME** was the most important book he had ever written, and it had caused a number of readers to lose their fear of death. An admirable feat for a work of fiction.

It is in his lesser known works, **THE PATH** and **MEDIUMS RARE**, that Matheson shares the compilation of his metaphysical studies. **THE PATH** (1993) is based on the writings of Harold W.

Percival, author of **THINKING AND DESTINY**, whom Matheson credits with being his single greatest influence. Matheson takes Percival's concepts and poses them as questions (see sidebar) that are discussed by a man and a stranger on a daily walk. Ten walks serve as lessons for the man and the reader. One can easily see the influence of Percival in Matheson's fiction after reading **THE PATH**, with its particular interest in how these concepts affect relationships and society. Not many of us find a connection between metaphysics and politics.

In **MEDIUMS RARE** (2000), Matheson presents dramatizations of incidents in psychic history, including descriptions of the work of the Fox sisters—credited with starting the Spiritualist movement—and Edgar Cayce, a famous psychic healer. Matheson maintained that he needed to write this book as there had been

THE PATH: A NEW LOOK AT REALITY

Why were you born?

What is the purpose of your life?

What is your true self?

What happens when you die?

Why are you reborn?

What is your karma?

What is your destiny?

RICHARD MATHESON

New York Times bestselling author of
What Dreams May Come

an increasing number of observations of telepathy in the psychotherapeutic world, and modern physics was altering the concepts of space and time and the laws of cause and effect. The book was originally part of a screenplay, "The Link", which Matheson was writing for a proposed television mini-series when the project was cancelled. Television viewers were not quite ready for such deep concepts, although current shows are featuring many metaphysical and paranormal story lines.

In his introduction to THE PATH, Matheson wrote: "I believe the final decade of this century is one of tremendous importance to mankind. If we accept the notion that thought, like electricity, has form and physical properties, and like light, can operate over space and time, then we can appreciate and be warmed by these concepts." The current popularity of paranormal romance, fiction, and television shows proves that Matheson was right. His legacy will be his body of work, which influenced a new generation of writers and readers, and if you truly believe what Matheson was trying to teach us, he is still out there, guiding us down the path.

QUESTIONS IN THE PATH

- What happens after you die?
- What is the after-life?
- What is heaven really?
- What is hell really?
- What is reincarnation?
- What conditions did you present in your life?
- What can you do to improve your next life?
- What is your karma?
- What is your destiny?
- What do your children inherit from you?
- What should your role be in your children's lives?
- How is the world of men and women different from the world of your children?
- Does true justice exist?
- Why does evil seem to flourish?
- Why do the innocent so often suffer?
- What is the "still small voice" of consciousness?
- What are accidents really?
- What is the purpose of disease?
- What is thought?
- What are two kinds of thought?
- What is active thinking?
- What is passive thinking?
- What are the actual results of thinking?
- What is the law of thought?
- What is body-mind?
- What does exteriorization mean?
- What is the connection between metaphysics and politics?
- Why is your true self so important to democracy?

BUILDING A BETTER BOMBSHELL

Richard Christian Matheson's THE RITUAL OF ILLUSION

by Holly Interlandi

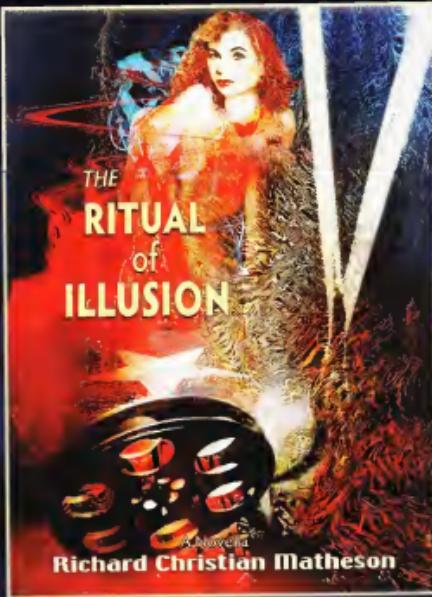
There is nothing regular about *THE RITUAL OF ILLUSION*—nothing usual, typical, or formulaic. And that is its greatest strength. The seedy side of Hollywood has been treated fictionally before, of course; even in the context of the supernatural. And it serves to say that this story could have been told by way of traditional prose: opening with a mystery, following a star to her demise, and culminating in the kind of horrific violence that can only be karmic retribution for tampering with reality. Perhaps it even would have worked. But Richard Christian Matheson was never one to take the usual approach to anything, and for that, *THE RITUAL OF ILLUSION* becomes something entirely different. It is a glittering enigma.

The book is a series of interviews related in script format, featuring commentary from fictional celebrities (who venture as far as to comment on real ones, in fabulously lip-smacking satire) on the subject of a mysterious, magnetizing starlet named Stephanie Vamore. The events are related entirely out of order. In fact, the resulting narrative has the effect of your learning the details as you're circling a drain: down, down, gradually letting go of the edges of normality before you dip completely under and drown. A ripe metaphor for the film business itself. It demands a reread almost immediately—not only to check for things you might have missed the first time (just who was that seven-foot tall monster man at the Malibu party?), but to continue to relish the prose style, which is nothing less than magnificent.

It would be easy to say something like, "This is Richard Matheson's son, so you should read it," but *RITUAL OF ILLUSION* requires no such familial pandering. The Young Matheson packs his novella with biting metaphors ("I heard she'd had a really bad lift and was hiding-out like Dillinger with an infected tambourine for a face") and softer ironies ("Movies are religion with popcorn. Someone write that down"). There is an interview transcription with Vamore herself that says almost nothing but tells us everything ("I don't like looking in the mirror"). And there are descriptive passages that are so good they tickle your nose hairs: "We all went to this vulgar club one night in London. Filled with the chic and illicit with paparazzi outside, pacing like telephoto ghouls... Dark, ventricle corridors led from the dance floor into profligate little rooms filled with gang bangs and needles scenes and sick messes. The music was so defeaning it cracked the ice in your drink." Relish it.

The book's whirlwind-interview format allows for a multitude of writing (speaking?) styles, and Matheson nails them all—particularly the obsessive, slightly self-conscious capsule of fandom given by one "Casey Anna Spicer", president of the mythical star's fan club: "She is the most gorgeous talented and hypnotizing woman who ever lived and when she is up on the screen and looking so sad and she cries and her emotions just pour out of her like blood I am completely alive and I wish I could just climb inside her and live in there which I can't but I think about it constantly." It's like a particularly poetic (and creepy) excerpt from a teen girl's diary.

Of course, all these different perspectives are what give *RITUAL OF ILLUSION* its ultimate sense of rumor, of Hollywood gossip, of the fact that none of this might have happened the way anybody told it; that Stephanie Vamore may well have not existed and everyone dreamt her up as someone they needed to have in their life, or project upon. Except, there are the deaths she caused. The lingering, bloody effects of movie magic gone wrong. I would not call this a horror story by any means—it's far beyond that, playing with our perceptions of fame and self, ghosting in and out of dialogues like a well-used reel of film.



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BUCK ROGERS

DOWN THE WORMHOLE: A Brief History of Sci-Fi Literature

Fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science Fiction is the improbable made possible.

-Rod Serling

What is Sci-Fi? How does one define the elements that are essential to Science Fiction? Men far better than myself, like literary giants Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov, have posited answers.

I used to debate the question, used to argue amongst my friends and peers just what it was that made something Sci-Fi. And then it hit me: I don't care.

See, it occurred to us that we could spend countless hours arguing over what traits and characteristics, or what settings and storylines constituted Science Fiction. Or, we could just spend that time reading those stories. At no point in our lives has debating what may or may not be Sci-Fi learnt any additional enjoyment to our readings.

Now, let's just be honest: Sci-Fi is the greatest literary genre to ever have graced the printed page. Bold statement? Sure, but it's absolutely true. Sci-Fi is the only genre of storytelling that can contain elements of other genres and still be itself. Sci-Fi can have wars, romance, intrigue, drama, fantasy, suspense, and mystery. It can take place in the here and now, or it can take place a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. But as long as it has a pinch of science or a dash of technology, it's Sci-Fi.

Imagine reading the most historically accurate book—a book 600 pages long—about a soldier and his struggles to survive in the U.S. Civil War. Every detail is meticulously researched down to the character's speaking cadence and the buttons on his shirt. Sounds like a great piece of historical fiction. Now imagine that on the very last page of this magnum opus you find out that the main character is an alien from another planet sent to see if humanity is ready for contact with his advanced civilization. Guess what? Now it's a Sci-Fi novel. What about if at the end of TOP GUN, after all the flying and shirtless volleyball montages, Iceman and Maverick fly out to meet the threat and, instead of finding Soviet Migs, they find an alien craft? You guessed it; TOP GUN just became a Sci-Fi movie.

But it's so much more than just a surprise cameo from an otherworldly visitor. It's been said that the best Sci-Fi holds a mirror up to society and let's us see ourselves through a new prism, one of possibility and consequences that the science and technology are just metaphors for the human condition, set dressing for our most audacious ambitions. Great Sci-Fi allows us to focus both externally on the big picture and internally on the self portrait seamlessly, but it does so without a heavy hand, without a brawhest or butty pulpit. It wraps these lessons in stories about alien worlds and incredible, universe-altering inventions. It takes us on fantastical adventures that show just how much potential mankind possesses, both for deeds of wondrous beauty and for cataclysmic folly.

At the end of it all, if you pressed us hard enough to define Sci-Fi, we wouldn't say that it was stories about space travel or aliens, or about technology run amok, or about the unintended consequences of meddling with science. While great Sci-Fi can contain all of these things, none are germane to making it all work. For us, the essence of the genre is this: the greatest force in all the universe (or any universe, for that matter) is the power of the mind. The problem solving, the improvising, the imagination and creativity. An unfettered mind given the opportunity to achieve its full potential is a weapon of such power and beauty there is no force in all of Creation that can match it.

Sci-Fi has a rich and beautiful story that is tied to some of the most significant events in history. In the following pages, it is our privilege to take you on a journey through that history. By no means is this meant to be a comprehensive examination of the field. In order to do that it would take something the size of an entire encyclopedia to be considered anything near complete. It is likely that we've left out your favorite book, and we apologize in advance for that. Our goal here is to create an understanding of how Sci-Fi evolved, how it reflected (or rejected) the happenings in the physical world, which authors, ideas, and styles dominated the different periods.

But we're not just talking about traditional literature. Comic books have always had some of the most cutting edge stories and storytellers in all the genre. Think of SUPERMAN, the story of a child whose father is a brilliant scientist from a technologically advanced civilization. This alien child is sent to earth as a beacon of hope to show the people just what kind of potential lives inside of all of them. His powers are derived from the differences in the solar atmosphere and are all biologically based. My friends, that's Science Fiction.



THE AGE OF REASON

The Age of Reason

The biggest challenge in putting this collection together was figuring out where to start. The world is full of articles from very smart people arguing that Sci-Fi started everywhere from THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH thousands of years ago to Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST. And while it's true that some of these older stories contain notions of flying crafts and alien visitors or even mad scientist archetypes, at FM we prefer our Science Fiction with, you know, some actual science. And while consensus makes for bad science, it does make for good Sci-Fi. The consensus I speak of is that beloved physicist Carl Sagan and Science Fiction superhero Isaac Asimov are of one mind as to who wrote the first bit of Sci-Fi literature. When two of the most intelligent and talented men who ever lived concur on this point, that's good enough for us.

By the early 1600s, Spain was in the middle of a religious civil war with its Inquisition. A small group of men lead by John Calvin and Martin Luther had struck a major blow against the Roman Catholic Church with The Reformation. And other parts of Europe were experiencing a cultural and artistic revolution in The Renaissance. The results of all of these events were that people were thinking differently. New generations of thinkers were coming of age and preparing to ask questions that cut to the very heart of nature itself, questions that would earn this era in history such monikers as The Enlightenment, The Scientific Revolution, and The Age of Reason. Amongst these thinkers were scientists René Descartes and Isaac Newton, who would champion the scientific method and uncover some of the universe's greatest mysteries. The philosophy of Kant would resonate to the corners of Europe and would shape the thinking of generations. But prior to Newton arriving on the scene, a German mathematician and astronomer named Johannes Kepler would make a name for himself by revolutionizing how the world looked into the night sky. And while he is known mostly for his hard science (work that was a primary influence on Newton), it was a small book, published four years after his death by his son, that many—including Sagan and Asimov—look to as the first true work of Science Fiction: SOMNIUM.

Johannes Kepler



When Johannes Kepler was six years old, the Great Comet of 1577 [as depicted in an engraving by Jiri Daschitzky] passed close to the earth, eventually contributing to his numerous theories about the nature of the solar system.



Mary Shelley



As the age of ideas and big thinkers was coming to a close, another writer would throw her hat in the ring as a pioneer of Sci-Fi: Mary Shelley. The wife of intellectual, poet, and all-around not-easy-to-get-along-with Percy Shelley, Mary was an independent thinker raised under the watchful eye of her philosopher father, William Godwin. While Mary did much to forward her intellectual values and stoke the fires of feminist causes, it is her foray into the scientific and fantastic that she is most remembered for: **FRANKENSTEIN**. The story of a scientist who attempts to unlock the mysteries of creating life started a revolution that Shelley could never have dreamed of when she wrote the novel at just 19 years of age.

The book would go on to spawn numerous films, the most famous of which were produced by Universal and starred the perfectly cast Boris Karloff. The book, interestingly enough, contains elements of both **FRANKENSTEIN** and **BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN**. But Shelley wasn't done there. 8 years after **FRANKENSTEIN** she would write one of the first apocalyptic novels in the history of literature: **THE LAST MAN**.

The story involves a group of characters living in the final years of the 21st Century. A plague has wiped out large percentages of the population and the survivors fight amongst themselves for what little remains. The book is complete with harrowing escapes, tragic losses, apocalyptic cults, and many other tropes that have appeared in great end-of-the-world literature from Matheson's **I AM LEGEND** to McCarthy's **THE ROAD**.

And while these stories may not be full of "proper science", their scientific speculation and overall tone are more than enough to cement them as progenitors to the great Science Fiction movement. If our dear Uncle Furry were here, Mr. Sci-Fi himself, he would spend an hour telling you why **FRANKENSTEIN** was one of the greatest Sci-Fi films of all time, not horror. And when he was done, you'd have a hard time disagreeing. While it may take place in a gothic castle, it's pure scientific madness, not supernatural horror like **DRACULA**, **THE MUMMY**, or **THE WOLFMAN**. The same is true of Wells' **INVISIBLE MAN**. Great monsters, but not necessarily horror (just terrifying to watch science run amok, though).



Frankenstein
by Mary Shelley
1818



Likely because she was a woman, Mary Shelley's name was initially not connected to her works. **FRANKENSTEIN** was first published anonymously, and her novel **THE LAST MAN** was attributed simply to "The Author of **Frankenstein**".

The Dynamic Victorian Duo

As The Enlightenment came to a close, ideas gave way to innovation; theory to practicality, science to technology. All the questions and answers produced from the previous two centuries were now put into action as The Scientific Revolution began. Steam powered ships and locomotives were making the world much smaller, putting people and places together that only years before had seemed a lifetime away. Men began to dream big, but those dreams came with plans now. In fact, at the end of the 18th Century it was the French who sent man into the sky with the world's first hot air balloons. Several years later, the French would also construct one of the world's first submarines, the Nautilus.

The Scientific Revolution became the first time that man saw himself as limitless when it came to exploration. The skies, the depths of the oceans, even space was seen as an attainable goal. It is no surprise then that the literature of the day would greatly reflect the technological marvels being created and would dream about their ultimate potentials. And although there were many writers that took up the mantle of science and its applications to fictional literature, two men—a Frenchman and a British chap—would lay the foundation for all future Science Fiction and become literary titans in the process.



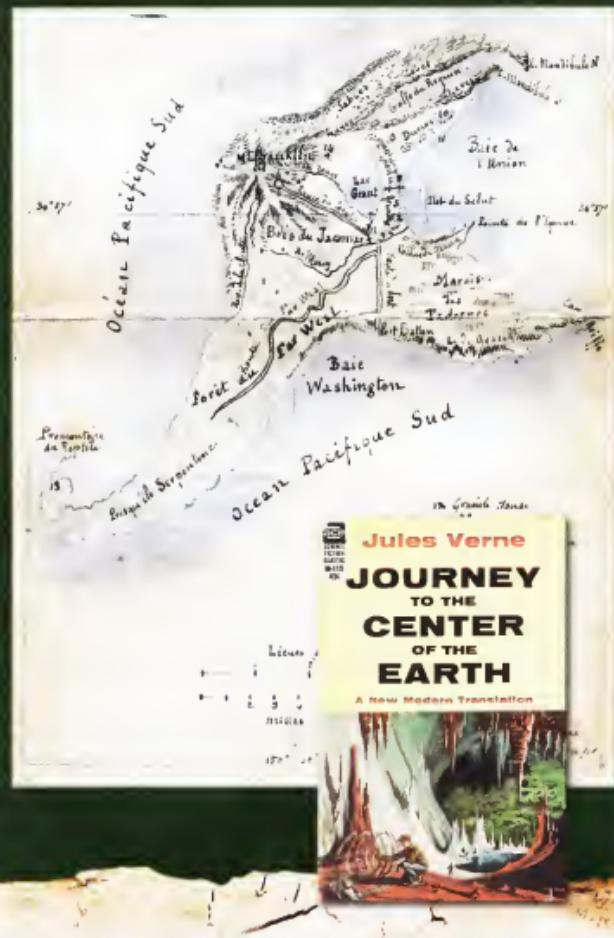
Originally planning to follow in his father's footsteps as an attorney, Jules Gabriel Verne—born in 1828 in Nantes, France—always knew he was destined for more. While writing was only a hobby during his legal studies, it was a chance encounter with the famous French novelist Alexandre Dumas (THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO, THE THREE MUSKETEERS) that would open the door Verne had been looking for his whole life. Thus began a journey that would lead Verne to publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel, who would go on to

Right: Verne was adamant that his stories were about travel and exploration, not about the science that carried the adventurers on their journeys. Verne was so keen to give his readers a sense of place that he would go as far as crafting maps. At right is a map Verne drew to accompany his novel, MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, the sequel to the highly acclaimed 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA (which is a reference to the distance traveled—not the depth—by the submarine, Nautilus).

JULES VERNE

contract Verne to write a series of adventure stories utilizing (and extrapolating on) the technology of the day.

It was under Hetzel's banner that Verne would create his most spectacular stories. He would take readers the bottom of the sea to battle giant sea creatures aboard a fantastic submarine in 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA. A simple bet would turn into the adventure of a lifetime as Phileas Fogg attempts to navigate his hot air balloon across the globe in AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS (note the usage of the submarine and the hot air balloon, French inventions that were only a



few decades old when Verne was imagining their seemingly infinite possibilities). In Verne's most prophetic stories, *FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON* and its sequel *AROUND THE MOON*, he imagined three men in a primarily aluminum ship called the Columbiad fired toward the moon from a large launching platform in Florida. Disaster strikes, and they ultimately crash land in the Pacific Ocean and are rescued by the military, eerily mirroring the events of the Apollo 11 crew despite the book predating the space mission by a full century.

The great irony is in the fact that Verne

himself rejected the scientific nature of his stories. To him, science and technology were never the stars of the show. In Verne's mind, what he was writing were more akin to fantastic travelogues. He wanted to show people the world and all its hidden and wondrous corners. He wanted to show them the moon and even dig deeper with his aptly titled *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH*. For Verne, the science and technology he created were merely a means to an end, a way to get his characters from point 'A' to a very, very distant point 'B'. He would likely be surprised (and possibly a little

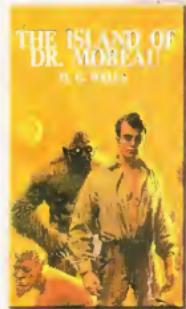
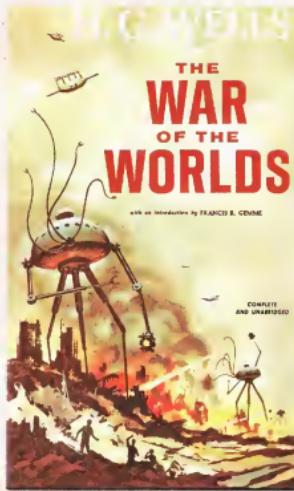
taken aback) to discover that he is roundly considered the father of Science Fiction.

But there is no doubtting his legacy. His Victorian sensibilities and wonderful machines are still as relevant today as they were a century-and-a-half ago. He's inspired movements like the incredibly popular Sci-Fi sub genre of Steampunk. *BIOSHOCK INFINITE*, one of the biggest selling video games of all time, has a visual esthetic that looks as if it was ripped directly from Verne's own imagination. Ray Bradbury summed it up best when he mused, "We are all, in one way or another, the children of Jules Verne."



H.G. WELLS

The literary catalogue of Herbert George Wells reads like a comprehensive Sci-Fi how-to. It's easy to forget that this one man was responsible for a whole slate of Science Fiction archetypes: the ability to move through time at will (THE TIME MACHINE), the scientific curiosity towards crossbreeding humans with other species (THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU), the "mad scientist turns murderous" narrative (THE INVISIBLE MAN), and perhaps most significantly, the concept of extraterrestrial superintelligence resulting in human genocide (THE WAR OF THE WORLDS). Perhaps no image in Science Fiction has resonated as strongly as that of the Martian tripod, towering above a human population that can only scurry about like insects. Although his later works such as THE FOOD OF THE GODS tended more towards political proselytizing than scientific treatise, Wells' earlier output is both astonishing and poetic, adhering to the rules of great fiction as well as the theories of evolution and experimentation.



Victorian Sci-Fi: Of Steam and Stodginess

While Verne and Wells certainly have grabbed the spotlight, Sci-Fi during the Victorian Age flourished under a handful of talented authors. Rudyard Kipling, best known for his JUNGLE BOOK, wrote an entire body of Science Fiction short stories dealing with alternate history, consequences of technology, and travel. Robert Louis Stevenson's STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE brings science and ethics to the forefront. Abraham Merritt wrote of science and fantasy adventures quite regularly. There was even an (unauthorized) sequel to Wells' WAR OF THE WORLDS by Garrett P. Serviss called EDISON'S CONQUEST OF MARS, where the famous scientist leads the charge against our Martian invaders by taking the fight to them on their own turf. It was an interesting period as scientific ideas and theories were being developed, but much of the technology like air and space travel and radio and TV were just shadows and dreams, giving the authors solid scientific foundations to work from while providing plenty of creative license to create new worlds and inventions.

KIPLING'S SCIENCE FICTION

RUDYARD KIPLING



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Dr. Jekyll
and Mr. Hyde

ASTOUNDING

SCIENCE-FICTION

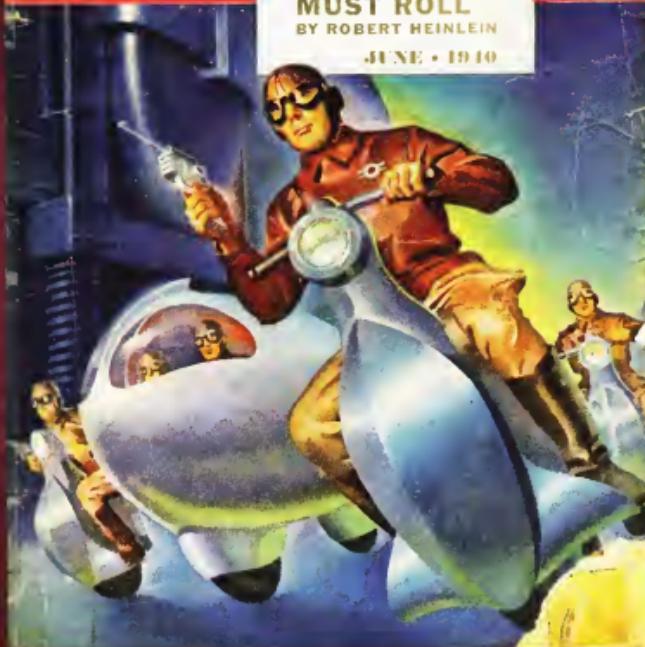
A STREET & SMITH PUBLICATION

20¢

THE ROADS
MUST ROLL

BY ROBERT HEINLEIN

JUNE • 1940

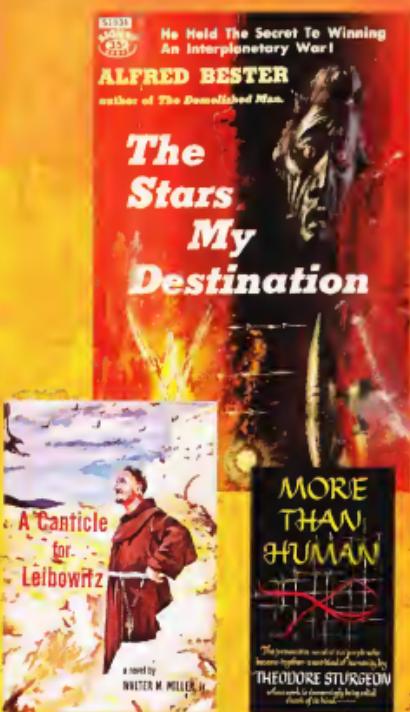


Before he was writing iconic novels like *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND* and *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, Robert Heinlein was a frequent contributor to the pulps. His story "The Roads Must Roll" was a standout that won a bevy of awards. A society that relies (or over-relied) on technology and those that maintain it has many concepts and implications that are more applicable today than they were six decades ago. And, while any time you can feature a work by E.E. Smith is cause to celebrate, he would have to take a backseat in August 1928 issue of Hugo Gernsback's *AMAZING STORIES* as Philip Nowlan would debut one of Sci-Fi's greatest and most enduring heroes: Buck Rogers.

THE GOLDEN AGE

With Sci-Fi now a part of the mainstream thanks to the prolific nature and wide availability of the pulps, along with the incredible base of talent that was being developed, the time period from the launch of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION in 1938 and continuing into the late 40s and early 50s is often looked at as the Golden Age for Sci-Fi. A growing darkness was hanging over the world in the form of Hitler and his Nazis. Clandestine organizations were formed to develop science and technology that would ultimately decide the fate of the world for all time. As the U.S. and its allies unified to stop Hitler and his quest for world domination, Science Fiction took a decidedly hopeful and ambitious turn. Stories were characterized by heroic men taking daring missions and using science and technology to defeat the forces of evil that would threaten mankind, very much mirroring the events of the real world.

The period is famous for launching the careers of, arguably, Sci-Fi's greatest graduating class Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, E.E. Smith, A.E. Van Vogt, Alfred Bester, Robert Heinlein, Philip K. Dick, Theodore Sturgeon, and Arthur C. Clarke, just to name a few. Intergalactic space operas spanning entire galaxies and massive alien civilizations were combined with spiritual themes to give the readers the biggest and most ambitious stories they had ever seen, evidenced by Asimov's sprawling FOUNDATION series and Theodore Sturgeon's meditation on the nature of existence, MORE THAN HUMAN. While the hopeful and ambitious tone continued past the war, a pervasive cynicism began to creep in after the dropping of the atomic bombs. The ability to destroy an entire civilization in a single moment, once an idea that existed solely in the realm of the fantastic, was now a very frightening reality. The moral implications and bases surrounding that decision, as well as many of the horrors of Nazism that would come to light in the years following WWII, would create a new mindset in some authors that was decidedly dark and pessimistic. But the optimism of the Golden Age would be the prevailing sentiment in Sci-Fi through the end of the period, up until declining sales, the cancellation of much Sci-Fi oriented entertainment, and new events in the real world conspired against the once strong genre to create a new and entirely different type of literary animal.



• THE SHRINKING MAN:

Richard Matheson

When asked about the title being changed for the movie to *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN*, Matheson remarked, "I thought the fact the man was shrinking was incredible enough on its own without having to add it to the title."

• TRIPLETARY:

E.E. Smith

The first book of Smith's *LENSMEN* series. 10 books sure to please even the most discerning space opera fan.

• THE LONG TOMORROW:

Leigh Brackett

A post-apocalyptic novel where science and technology are restricted in a world dominated by ideology and fanaticism.

• A CASE OF CONSCIENCE:

James Blish

One of the few novels of the time dealing with religion, as a Jesuit priest confronts an alien race that displays an incredible moral awareness but with no discernible religion.

• THE SPACE MERCHANTS:

Frederik Pohl & C.M. Kornbluth

Part MAD MEN, part THEY LIVE. A world where corporations rule and the populace is lulled into a false sense of worth by being encouraged to chase materialism.

• THE BIG TIME:

Fritz Leiber

Two warring factions battle across time as they are constantly changing the outcomes of historical events to try and gain on upper hand.

• LEST DARKNESS FALL:

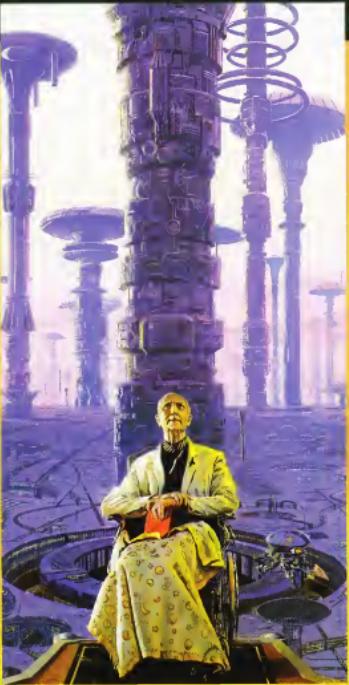
L. Sprague de Camp

An archaeologist is transported back to ancient Rome and ends up changing the future, giving readers one of the most significant examples of the Alternate History sub-genre.

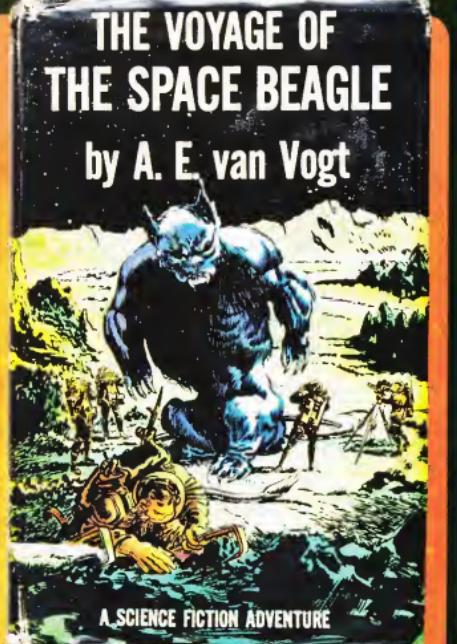
• WHO?

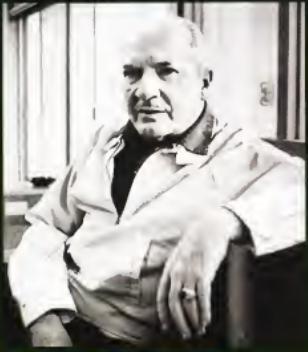
Algis Budrys

An atomic age novel dealing with the Cold War and body enhancements via technology.

**ASIMOV'S FOUNDATION**

Asimov's *FOUNDATION* stands by itself as likely the greatest space opera of all time. It is Science Fiction as THE LORD OF THE RINGS is to Fantasy. It also benefits from the fact that Asimov himself was an accomplished biochemist with an almost savant-like grasp of science, technology, and literature (Asimov would go on to write celebrated textbooks about everything from physics to Shakespeare). From a character named Salo to a massive space force known as The Empire, the lasting influences of the series on such pop culture mainstays as *STAR WARS* are apparent.

**A SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE**



ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

Robert Heinlein had a career spanning more than 40 years that featured all manners of science fantasy and "future history", but he is best remembered as a proponent of what is sometimes called "Hard Sci-Fi"—that is, focused intently on scientific accuracy and the achievements at hand rather than individual characters or emotions. The book that most famously embodies his penchant for militaristic technology is *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, a novel so stark in its ambitions it was considered cartoonish enough to be made into Paul Verhoeven's ridiculously over-the-top film satire. Heinlein is also responsible for alien paranoia of *THE PUPPET MASTERS*, which would later become an influential film starring Donald Sutherland. Heinlein was prolific in young adult fiction as well, however, and often penned less heavy-handed tales, such as *HAVE SPACESUIT—WILL TRAVEL* and *STARMAN JONES*.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

STARSHIP TROOPERS

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

HAVE SPACE SUIT—
WILL TRAVEL



ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Like Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke was reknowned for his extensive publications on real science and the opportunities for space travel (many written well before Sputnik launched), such as *THE EXPLORATION OF THE MOON* (1954) and *PROFILES OF THE FUTURE* (1962). However, Clarke's extensive fiction work is often (understandably) overshadowed by his collaboration with Stanley Kubrick on *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* (1968) and its sequels. In fact, his work includes a massive number of novels, novellas, and short stories—*2001* itself being based on his short story "The Sentinel" (1951). Other popular novels include the dystopic *CHILDHOOD'S END*, which chronicles a strangely peaceful invasion by alien "Overlords", and *RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA*, a harder Sci-Fi adventure that won both the Hugo and Nebula awards.

Pan Science Fiction

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

TOP: Robert Heinlein, L. Sprague de Camp, and Isaac Asimov all worked in aerospace engineering in Philadelphia during WWII.

THE GOLDEN AGE:
THE SILVER AGE

WHERE NO SUPERMAN HAS GONE BEFORE

Around the same time that Science Fiction prose was experiencing its Golden Age, another literary medium was transforming alongside it. The Golden Age of comic books is defined by many things, but in terms of Sci-Fi, it gave us superpowered aliens, experimentally-enhanced soldiers, and a plethora of capable characters that could rescue regular humans from a score of intergalactic menaces. The attitude was



1 DR. SIVANA STRIKES AT SHAZAM
NO GREATER EVIL GENIUS THAN DR. SIVANA, THE WORLD'S WICKEDST SCIENTIST, HAS EVER EXISTED ON THIS EARTH OF Ours! HIS SINISTER AMBITION IS TO RULE NOT ONLY EARTH, BUT THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE! THE VERY FIERCE AND FANTASTIC CAPTAIN MARVEL IS CHALLENGED AS DR. SIVANA'S CRETIN SETS IN MOTION HIS LATEST ALLEGIANCIA PLOT TO GIVE HIM POWER OVER ALL THE UNIVERSE! READ ON FOR 100% TITANIC, CRIMES, AND ELECTRIC EPISODES COMPLETE IN THIS 100% ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

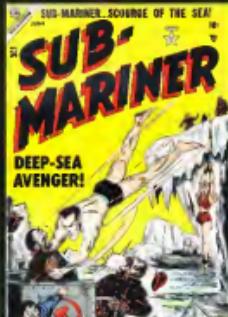


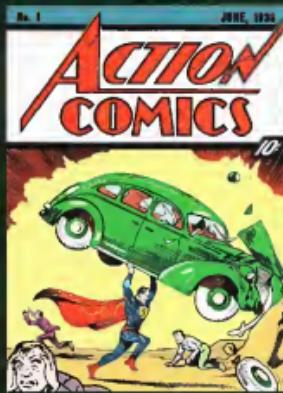
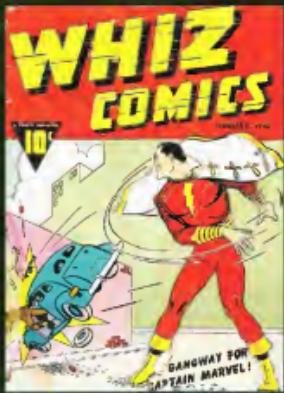
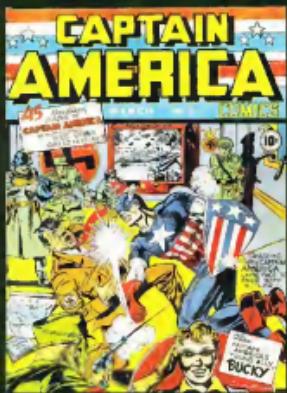
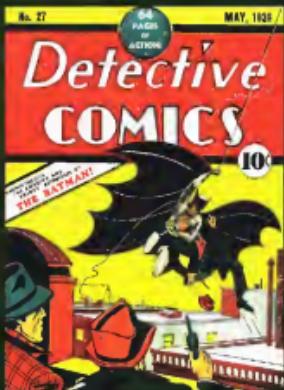
one of hope and empowerment: Captain Marvel was the alter ego of a regular kid named Billy Batson who was endowed with special powers by a wizard. Secret identities were a key component to the inherently good-hearted Golden Age tale: rather than gain endless acclaim for his heroic deeds, Superman chose to hide among the normal world as journalist Clark Kent (and be hounded by his boss at the Daily Planet). The point, for him, was not to be famous and adored, but to keep close the knowledge that he was making a difference.

Most iconic DC superheroes made their debut during the Golden Age, giving the DC Universe a distinctly different vibe from Marvel



The DC and Marvel Universes have come to be associated with the Golden Age and the Silver Age, respectively, due to when most of their heroes were created; although Marvel characters did exist in the 1940s, they weren't the bonnier personalities of, say, Iron Man or Hulk (sorry, Namor).





in later years. In addition to Superman (*ACTION COMICS #1*), the Golden Age gave us Batman (*DETECTIVE COMICS #27*), Jay Garrick Flash (*FLASH COMICS #1*), Alan Scott Green Lantern (*ALL-AMERICAN COMICS #16*), Wonder Woman (*ALL-STAR COMICS #8*), and Aquaman (*MORE FUN COMICS #73*). Like the hard Sci-Fi of the time, these comics portrayed their heroes nobly defending the galaxy, donning sidekicks (sometimes of the robot variety), and favoring morality and exploration over ulterior motives. The possibilities were vast, but narratives remained staunchly idealistic, innocent, and a natural outgrowth of a people riding high on its own accomplishments.

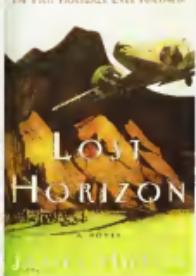
Captain America is a flagship Marvel character as well as a favorite, and it's clear that Cap perfectly represents the ideals captured in Golden Age comic books. More than just an instrument of propaganda, Steve Rogers was a truly sympathetic character whose inherent goodness and kind spirit elevated him to his position. Ambition and good old American know-how managed to transform an honorable weakling into someone capable—and quite fond, it seems—of punching Hitler in the face. Advanced science fixes someone up and sends him off to defeat the bad guys? Talk about empowerment. No wonder he felt so out of place when the Avengers dug him out of the ice in 1964.

It's The End of the World As We Know It:

UTOPIAS AND DYSTOPIAS

While poets like T.S. Eliot tackled disillusionment and the horrors of World War I head-on (or as head-on as poetry would allow them to), Science Fiction writers went to a different place. They began to depict futuristic or alternate worlds that eventually, through politics or science, became homogenized to the point of parody. Some writers, like *LOST HORIZON*'s James Hilton, depicted utopian societies from which an escape could only mean corruption by reality—be it aging, boredom, or general misery. More often, the “utopia” crossed the entire scope of the novel, refusing to be confined by a single city or regime—sort of along the lines of Thomas More’s original 16th-century satire *UTOPIA*, but with a methodological explanation for how things might have turned out the way they did, somewhere along the impending timeline of human achievement.

The First Paperback Ever Published



BRAVE NEW WORLD

Aldous Huxley's veiled criticism of emotional and psychological regulation, *BRAVE NEW WORLD*, still retains its philosophical weight some seventy-odd years later. In 1932, it was considered the very first literary attack on the humanistic idealism of turn-of-the-century writers who seemed to think that mankind would eventually solve all of their problems through science. Huxley writes of drugged individuals bred to be satisfied servants in a world 600 years in the future, suggesting that scientific methods once considered a “solution” might nigh well be closer to a nightmare. The novel gave rise to a particular form of fiction—the “dystopia”—that usually features a main character (in this case, John the Savage) disregarding or challenging the rules of a world that sees individuality as dangerous.



GEORGE 1984 ORWELL



FAHRENHEIT 451

Ray Bradbury: friend of Farry Ackerman, prophetic short story writer, powerful novelist, clear thinker. And yet Bradbury is best remembered—by school classrooms and scholars, at least—for a novel called FAHRENHEIT 451 that not-so-discretely follows a man whose job it is, in some mysterious future world, to set fire to literature. While the bestselling book only scratches the surface of Bradbury's extensive and imaginative catalogue, it is nevertheless a powerful entry into the subgenre of dystopia and a deft reminder of good Sci-Fi's most potent weapon: its ability to tell a captivating story in an apparently strange universe and, in doing so, bring out the dangers of our own. [Ed. Note: For more on Ray Bradbury, see FM 265.]

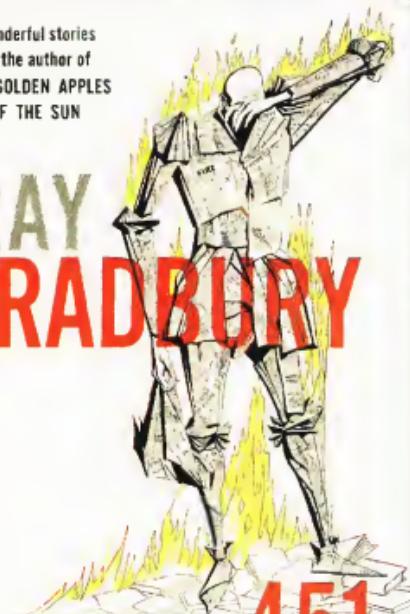
1984

Although motivated almost exclusively by political ideology, George Orwell's NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR is nonetheless an affecting vision of a totalitarian future depicting the dissolution of freedom and language. The novel's iconic concepts, such as Big Brother and the Thought Police, are part of today's daily lexicon. The fact that the novel was set in a year that is now 30 years old does nothing to lessen its impact; rather, it serves as a daunting reminder that such a future could very well still occur, and that to George Orwell, the eighties were as faded and imaginary as the year 2050 is to us.

Wonderful stories
by the author of
THE GOLDEN APPLES
OF THE SUN

RAY BRADBURY

FAHRENHEIT 451



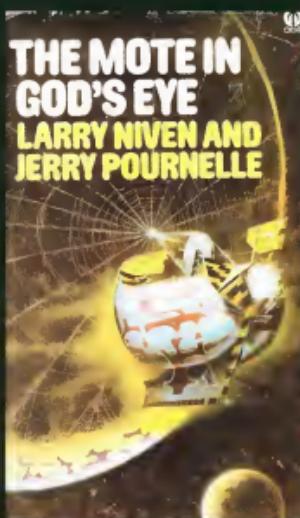
BALLANTINE BOOKS

BEATNIKS AND SPUTNIK THE NEW WAVE OF SCI-FI

Counterculture. What does it mean? It's like chemistry: for every (cultural) action there must be an equal and opposite reaction. And in the 1960s and 70s, Science Fiction reacted to the hopeful, exploratory themes of the Golden Age with what has been dubbed the "New Wave".

By 1960, the number of Science Fiction magazines had grown exponentially to include GALAXY, THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION, STARTLING STORIES, IMAGINATION, INFINITY, and countless others. No longer a medium of the fringe, Sci-Fi—so penned by FM's illustrious Editor-in-Chief—grew towards new dimensions. However, the pulp market was becoming saturated, and actual scientific achievements—such as launching the first man-made satellites—were making the usual stories about space exploration seem dry and old-fashioned.

A chief defining characteristic of New Wave Science Fiction is its crossover fantasy appeal. Many of the flagship series and novels of the 60s and 70s dabble in alternate universes, magic, and even dragons. The 1960s counterculture began to sneak its way into the Sci-Fi of the period, as more and more novels depicted topics previously left to other genres. Many authors began to look at Science Fiction as a form of higher literature; shunning the pulp novels of the 50s, experimenting with format, and demanding to be taken more seriously. Michael Moorcock's editorial leadership of the British magazine NEW WORLDS, beginning in 1964, kicked off this new era in earnest, claiming to find new "avant-garde" avenues for Sci-Fi. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND by Robert Heinlein flipped the Golden Age on its head and also marked the beginning of a new literary norm by introducing a main character who was not sent to

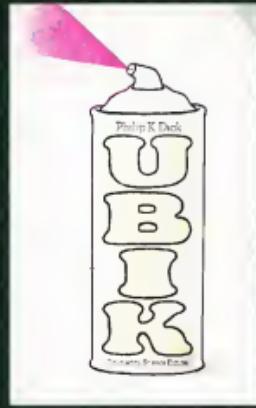


Many of Larry Niven's (below) stories took place in what he referred to as Known Space, an established universe inhabited by both humans and extraterrestrials—often "locally", as in his first published short, "The Coldest Place" (the dark side of the planet Mercury).



explore or make contact with other life, but who was raised by aliens and had to learn how to live among humanity—in every possible capacity. The book was criticized for "promoting" unorthodox ideas about free love.

Larry Niven built civilization into new shapes—specifically, circular—in *RINGWORLD*, which continues to influence the Sci-Fi landscape in video games such as *HALO*. Niven also wrote *THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE* alongside Jerry Pournelle, treating alien life ("Moties") as a patently adult topic. The publication of Philip K. Dick's *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* marked the transition of alternate history from fantasy fluke to historical commentary. Ursula K. Le Guin tackled the topics of gender and sexuality—almost ignored in Science Fiction up to that time—in her novels *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* and *THE DISPOSSESSED*. Kurt Vonnegut, while not always considered a Science Fiction writer, ended *CAT'S CRADLE* with a nuclear winter and gave us a notorious vision of a dystopian empire in *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*. Joe Haldeman's *FOREVER WAR* bore a marked contrast to Robert Heinlein's *STARSHIP TROOPERS* in its attitude towards the military, taking a critical, post-Vietnam approach to warfare, inspired partly by Haldeman's own personal experiences in combat.



Ridley Scott catapulted Philip K. Dick's science fiction stories into the popular lexicon when he adapted Dick's short novel *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?* into the groundbreaking movie *BLADE RUNNER* (at left: Scott and Dick during production of the film). Although Dick sadly did not live to see the final product (he died just a few months before its release), his surreal futuristic novels (such as *UBIK*, above) enjoyed immense posthumous popularity in association with the 80s cyberpunk movement.



THE HUGO AND NEBULA AWARD - WINNING NOVEL

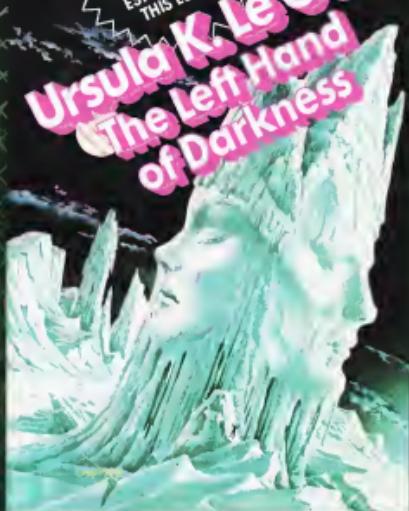
JOE HALDEMAN

THE FOREVER WAR

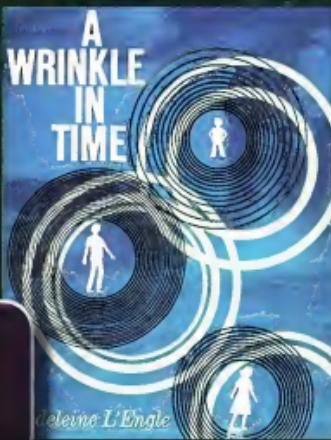


A NEW
BEFORE-PUBLISHED
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY
BY THE AUTHOR
COMMISSIONED
ESPECIALLY FOR
THIS EDITION

Ursula K. Le Guin
*The Left Hand
of Darkness*



Iconic New Wave Sci-Fi novels often had significance beyond science: criticism of warfare [Joe Haldeman's *FOREVER WAR*], androgyny [Ursula K. Le Guin's *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*], resurrection [Philip José Farmer's *TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO*], eroticism [Robert Heinlein's *STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND*], and religion [Madeleine L'Engle's *A WRINKLE IN TIME*].



DUNE

1965 saw the publication of Frank Herbert's DUNE, which marked a number of Sci-Fi firsts. The book would go on to become the first in a mega-series lasting for decades, while a sequel to the original (CHILDREN OF DUNE) would be the first Science Fiction novel to make an appearance on the New York Times bestseller list. DUNE was also the very first Science Fiction novel to win both the Hugo and Nebula awards, uniting popular opinion and critical acclaim.

DUNE marked the debut, more or less, of many fantasy tropes that Herbert adapted for Science Fiction and eventually came to be taken for granted: an entire story centered around people (House Atreides) and a planet (Arrakis) that has little in common with Earth or Earthlings, a new world with its own cultural, environmental, and religious history, new species (sandworms) and races (Fremen), and a wholly developed economic system based on a new substance (melange). It is a political behemoth of a book, but still gives its characters and alien concepts their due: the idea of "drown sands" alerting the sandworms to human presence (certain B-movies owe a lot to this concept) still sends chills up my spine.



SFX Scien-terrific Picks!

Roger Zelazny swiped the rug out from under us by introducing the concept of Shadow Earth in NINE PRINCES IN AMBER (1970), which claimed that the "real" world we lived in was a mere Shadow of another, adding echoes of quantum physics and alternate universe theory alongside fantasy-esque sword fights. Frederick Pohl turned asteroids into interdimensional portals in GATEWAY, while Madeleine L'Engle sent children through space in A WRINKLE IN TIME, and then inside cellular formations in its sequel, A WIND IN THE DOOR. Piers Anthony began his sprawling Xanth series with A SPELL FOR CHAMELEON, Anne McCaffrey challenged our concepts of dragons in DRAGONFLIGHT, which may sound like high fantasy, but actually takes place on a distant planet where the dwellers there have genetically engineered lizards for their own purposes. Harlan Ellison solidified the arrival of the New Wave movement by editing two collections of original stories depicting transgressive material not generally found in pulpy or traditional Sci-Fi: DANGEROUS VISIONS and AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS.

JURASSIC PARK



MICHAEL CRICHTON

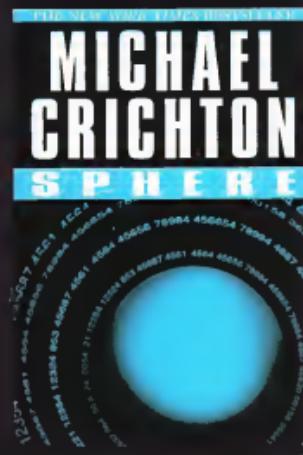
is probably why his catalogue is often classified as mainstream alongside writers of legal thrillers and mysteries.

The treatment of Michael Crichton books as bestselling adventure novels rather than Sci-Fi helped them to cross over to an audience who might not normally be interested in science at all. In the case of the monumentally successful JURASSIC PARK (1990), the action sequences featuring dinosaurs are the source of mainstream interest, but the book would get absolutely nowhere without its scientific treatises on chaos theory (a brand new concept in 1990), resurrecting species through DNA sequencing (only hypothetical at the time), and brand new research about dinosaurs themselves that had paleontologists scratching their heads. In the book, Crichton plunges headlong into these new ideas, offering detailed technical specs in equal capacity with the rampaging monsters.

Each new book, beginning with THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN in 1969, introduced a new scientific concept to the general public along with its exciting story: an alien virus, neurological treatments for epilepsy (THE TERMINAL MAN, 1972), sign language communication with apes (CONGO, 1980), quantum theory (TIMELINE, 1999), genetic research (NEXT, 2006).

Crichton made nods to classic Science Fiction throughout his career, from the squid in 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA in SPHERE (1987) to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's THE LOST WORLD (also the name of Crichton's 1995 sequel to JURASSIC PARK). Crichton's impact on Sci-Fi remains indelible: that its concepts, when given the proper attention, can become palatable to a very wide audience, thus breaching the supposed gap between "nerdy" Sci-Fi and regular fiction.

Michael Crichton is the best-selling Sci-Fi author of all time. Wait a minute, you say—Science Fiction? Isn't he a mainstream writer? And yes, although he dabbled in basic thrillers throughout his career (RISING SUN, EATERS OF THE DEAD), in the case of his major works, Crichton (1942-2008) put the "science" into Science Fiction by weaving contemporary science into the narratives so completely that it would be impossible to tell the story without mention of the theories that inspired it in the first place. In a Michael Crichton book, the science is always cutting-edge: global warming, computer coding, genetic manipulation, virtual reality. No spacecraft or stereotypical big-headed aliens here—Crichton's Sci-Fi is as close to real-world science as it is possible to get, which



ATOMIC COMICS: THE SILVER AGE



In 1954, the newly formed Comics Code Authority took it upon themselves to actively censor comic book content in the name of "protecting children", who were seen as the primary audience for comics. Among the restrictions placed were that "good always triumph over evil" and that there be no mention of "torture, vampires, ghouls, cannibals, or werewolfism". Ouch. This changed the landscape of comics significantly. Some publishers sought to print their content under the "magazine" banner (see: CREEPY, EERIE, and MAD) to avoid code restrictions. EC Comics, known for its horror titles, all but went out of business, leaving the market wide open.

In 1963, Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and several others at Marvel Comics spurred one of the greatest creative renassances of the 20th century, creating a countless number of new superheroes that could speak to this new Silver Age—ones who were neighbors, friends, or the kid next door who might suddenly get bitten by a spider. Suddenly, humans were the strange ones. Spider-Man, the X-Men, Iron Man, Hulk, Daredevil, Fantastic Four, and Doctor Strange all saw print for the first time during the Silver Age; and their powers came from inhuman places: mutations, radioactivity, science gone wrong. These were ordinary people put into extraordinary circumstances. Strangers in a strange land, indeed.

AMAZING FANTASY



The 80s

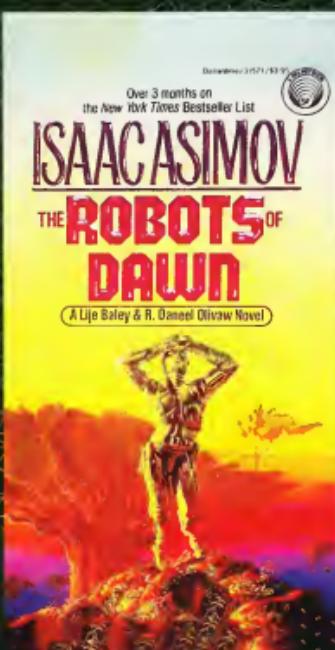
The Future is Now

By the beginning of the 1980s it was fairly apparent that we were finally beginning to live in the future we had always imagined. Starting in 1979, the U.S. launched its first space shuttle mission and didn't look back until the Challenger accident in 1986. The idea of traveling to the stars and visiting other worlds became an issue of "when" and not "if". People were beginning to have phones that connected to nothing but air and could be tucked away in briefcases. The Fermilab in Illinois had finished building the largest ever particle accelerator and was smashing atoms together to literally uncover the very fabric of the universe. Heck, even the American government was developing a space-based weapons system called The Star War Program.

In the theaters, *STAR WARS* had blown audiences away with its combination of cutting edge visual FX and its action-based, western-influenced story and characters. The space opera was officially back and stories about galactic empires and exotic worlds were all the rage. Isaac Asimov returned to add five more novels to his influential and iconic *FOUNDATION* and *I, ROBOT* series after a three decade hiatus. Dan Simmons' *HYPERION CANTOS* and Orson Scott Card's *ENDER'S GAME* are consistently ranked as amongst the best space operas—and best Sci-Fi, for that matter—of all time. But it wasn't just the grand, epic ideas that were being explored. Along with a renaissance for some of the tried and true Sci-Fi favorites, a handful of newer, smaller, cutting edge pieces of technology were about to invade the genre.

Although the tech had existed prior to the 80s, it was the decade of excess that brought the technological revolution into our homes. The computer, just a decade earlier thought of as a massive machine that helped to send men to the moon, was now made to sit on a desk and modified to be used by ordinary folk. Despite being rudimentary by today's standards, the potential for what this piece of hardware could achieve was not lost on the writers of the era.

And it wasn't just the computer that sparked the collective imaginations of the creative world, the Atari 2600 had taken video gaming and, again, brought it home. TVs weren't just for watching any more. A TV was now a conduit to a new world whose onscreen action could be controlled by a user. What was once a passive, spectator-only affair now became an immersive, user-controlled experience. Video games would play a massive role in Sci-Fi cinema during the 80s. *WAR GAMES* imagines a machine that can think for itself and wants to play games, not realizing that the games it plays may very well end all life on the planet. *TRON* tells the story of a computer programmer beamed into the very video game world he created where he must play his own games in order to survive. The



DAN SIMMONS HYPERION

THE HUGO AWARD-WINNING NOVEL



HUGO WINNER

New York Times
Bestselling Author

NEBULA WINNER

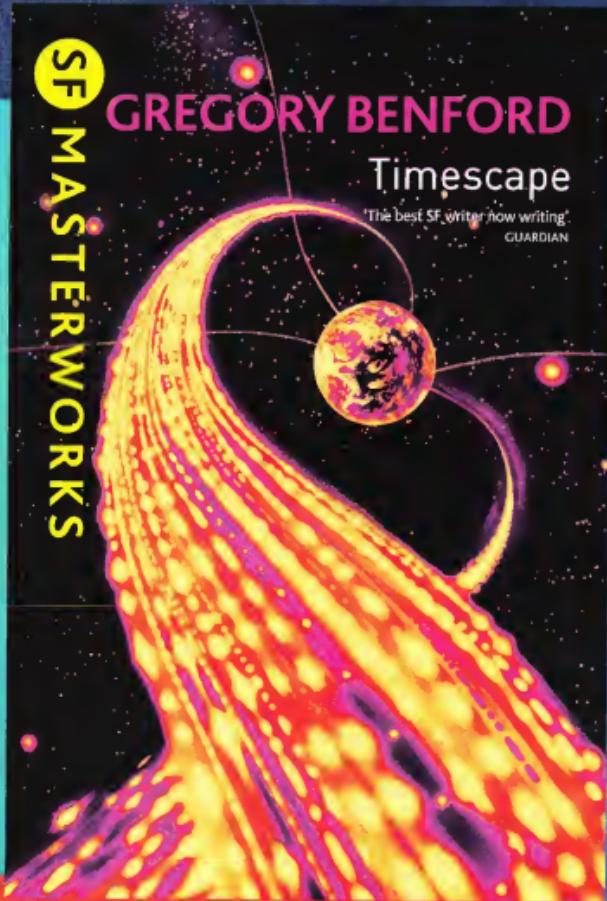
ORSON SCOTT CARD ENDER'S GAME

A MAJOR MOTION
PICTURE EVENT
IN 2013

SF
MASTERWORKS

GREGORY BENFORD Timescape

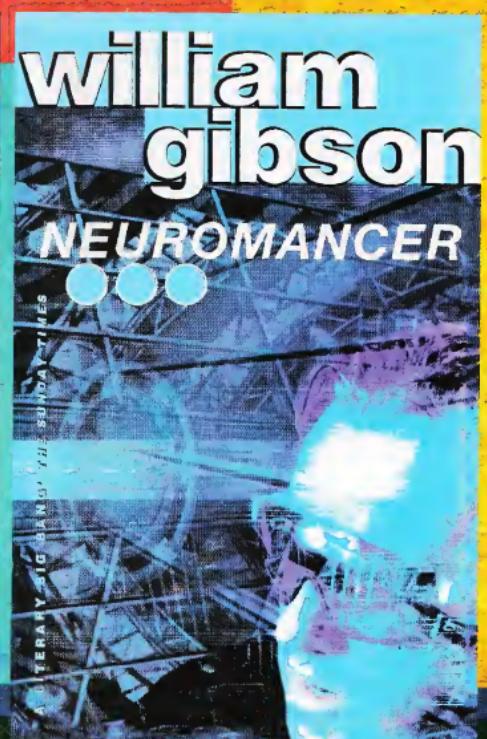
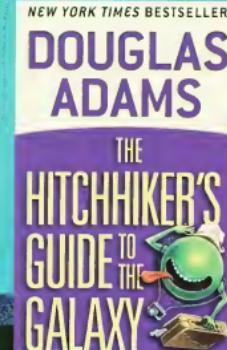
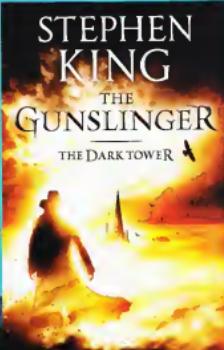
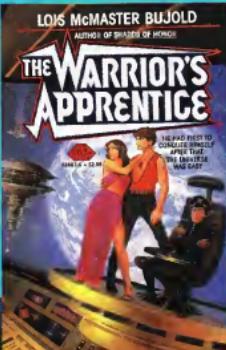
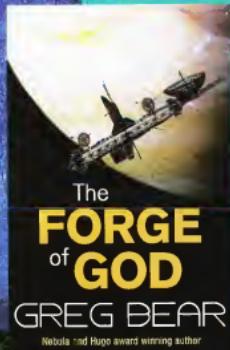
'The best SF writer now writing'.
GUARDIAN



Dan Simmons drew not just inspiration, but material, from the epic poetry of John Keats to create the story of the HYPERION tetralogy, one of Sci-Fi's greatest space operas.

Film was also one of the first to feature visual FX largely created on a computer. THE LAST STARFIGHTER invites us to follow a young man who is recruited as a spaceship pilot by an intergalactic force after he shows an incredible aptitude for playing a video game (which had all along been set up as a recruiting tool by this alien species). Along with the VCR, which now allowed people to bring movies into their own home and watch them on their own timeframe, Sci-Fi writers had plenty to work with; and they certainly didn't waste any time using these new toys.

In 1984 (the year, not the book), William Gibson would create the most influential book that used these smaller technological devices as their plot devices. NEUROMANCER would take the very limited abilities that current computers had and would extrapolate them to an almost infinite scope—it would also be the first book to win all three major Sci-Fi awards: The Hugo, The Nebula, and the Philip K. Dick Award. NEUROMANCER follows Case, a young man with an extraordinary ability to use The Matrix, a



network that all computers are connected to and can be accessed and hacked using various types of visual interfaces. It's amazing to think that at the time the book was written, the internet was a decade away from being anything close to consumer friendly. Gibson's innovations and visions for how computers could instantly transport information across the globe, be used to take down companies and governments, and even become part of a human being were so influential that it spawned one of Sci-Fi's biggest sub-genres: Cyberpunk. The Wachowskis, creators of *THE MATRIX* trilogy, have often cited Gibson's book as the primary inspiration in the creation—and the name—of their cinematic universe.

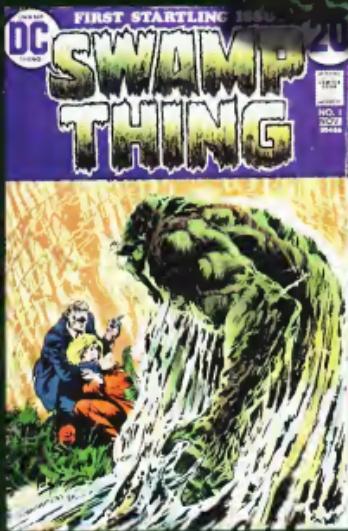
The technological innovations of the 80s, combined with the escalation of the Cold War as Ronald Reagan and U.S. stood against the Soviets and their "Evil Empire", as well as the indulgent excesses and fast, wealthy lifestyles that characterized the decade made for an endless wellspring of inspiration that Sci-Fi writers could draw from.

Sci-terrific Picks!

SUNDIVER and **STARTIDE RISING**: **David Brin**. The opening novels of Brin's *UPLIFT* series where humans try to find their place amongst the great galactic civilizations. **FOUNDATION'S EDGE** and **FOUNDATION AND EARTH**: **Isaac Asimov**. Asimov adds two more books to his genre-defining *FOUNDATION* series. **COUNT ZERO** and **MONA LISA OVERDRIVE**: **William Gibson**. Two books to complete his unofficial "Sprawl Trilogy", as both take place in the same fictional setting as *NEUROMANCER*. Consider *PHLEBAS* and **THE PLAYER OF GAMES**: **Iain Banks**. The first two books in Banks' amazing *CULTURE* series. 10 books, galactic empires, war, technologies, economies, another great space opera. **REPLAY**: **Ken Grimwood**. Upon his death, Jeff Winston awakes to find himself in his teenage body decades earlier with all his memories intact, allowing him to make new decisions. **THE HANDMAID'S TALE**: **Margaret Atwood**. Lots of accolades for this story detailing a woman's struggle to survive in a theocratic dystopia. **DOWNBELOW STATION**: **C.J. Cherryh**. One of Sci-Fi's most prolific authors opens her *ALLIANCE-UNION* series (over 25 books and short stories) where future exploration is big business, akin to the days of the East India Company during the Age of Exploration.

Comics in the Bronze Age

Comic book distribution underwent a drastic change in the 1970s: rather than being displayed at mainstream newsstands, single issues would be sent to specialty comic book shops—less concerned with catering to mainstream tastes than with piquing the interest of longtime readers. Marvel Comics began to expand its roster of X-Men and Avengers by introducing minorities and tackling global issues. DC Comics engineered an imprint focused on darker characters, many of which went on to become staples of the mature-oriented Vertigo line: Swamp Thing, Jonah Hex, and Shade the Changing Man.



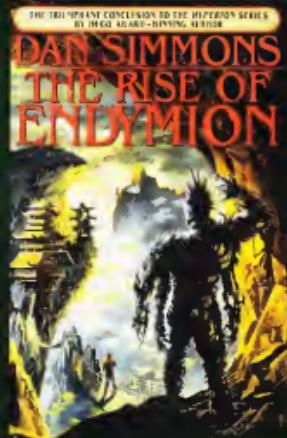
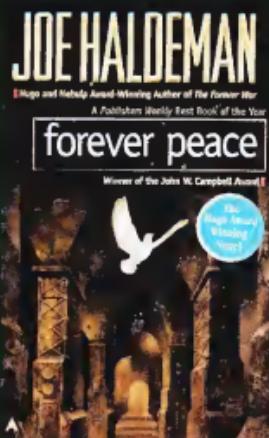
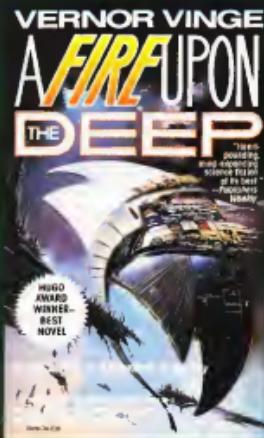
THE 90s: SCI-FI GETS REAL

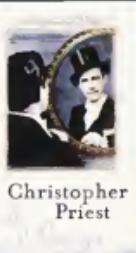
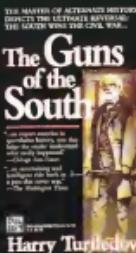
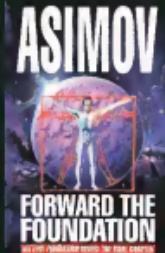
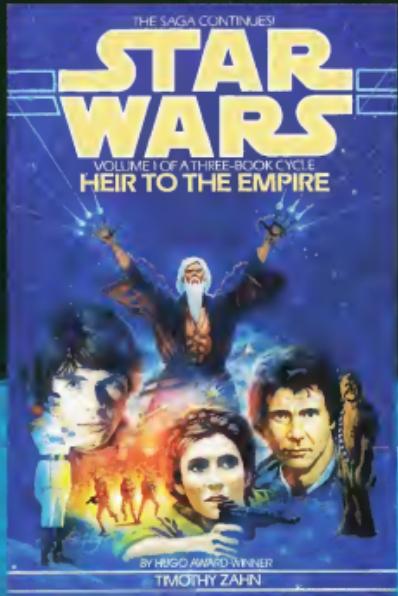
Much of the 90s was spent trying to swing the pendulum away from the grand, over-the-top, turned-to-11 that was so prevalent in the previous decade. Simple and functional grunge music replaced the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll-fueled hair metal. Women's fashions came back to a more sensible shape after years of being characterized by shirts and sweaters with linebackers shoulder pads. Bottom line: in many ways, the 90s was ridiculous. While it did create some incredible works of Sci-Fi, it also was awash in self adulation. Bigger for the sake of bigger. Louder for the sake of louder. Limits were removed simply because they could be, not because they should be.

By the late 90s, Sci-Fi had shifted to reflect this more prudent and thoughtful cultural reality. No one author was more indicative of this than Michael Crichton. His science based adventures took existing technology and extrapolated it to the next level, usually taking place in the here and now so the immediate effects on current society of near-term scientific excesses could be analyzed.

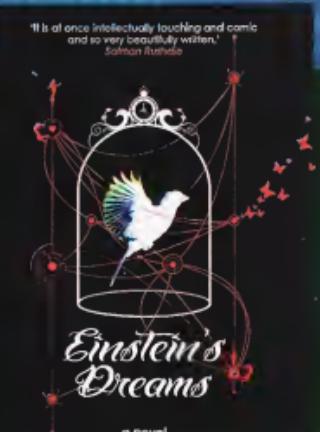
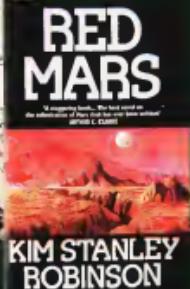
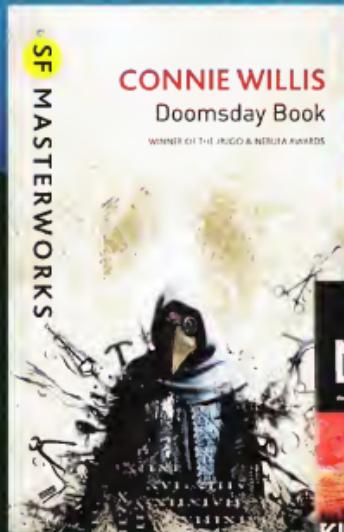
Neal Stephenson's SNOW CRASH combined the newly burgeoning internet along with the latest technological breakthrough in computing known as Virtual Reality. These elements, mixed with the new designer drug culture and evolving philosophical concepts, made for one of the 90s most engaging reads. One of the side effects of the era returning to a more sensible approach to Sci-Fi was that there was a greater focus on hard science as opposed to the soft science of the New Wave and 80s.

Even when traveling to other planets, as in Kim Stanley Robinson's RED MARS trilogy, the tone is reality-based as it imagines a truer version of the red planet. Gone is the Barsoom of Edgar Rice Burroughs where aliens and beautiful naked princesses do battle with flying ships while avoiding strange creatures and subterranean civilizations. Robinson explores the idea of earth having suffered environmental disasters that has pushed the planet's remnants towards Mars in an effort to terraform and make it habitable and hopefully learn from society's past mistakes.





After a decade-long break, **Timothy Zahn** breathed life into the **STAR WARS** universe with his **HEIR TO THE EMPIRE** trilogy. Following the main characters five years after the events of **RETURN OF THE JEDI**, this series would become canon for fans, retaining the original sense of drama and adventure that had taken the world by storm in 1977. **HEIR** brought us a new nemesis in the form of Grand Admiral Thrawn—a worthy successor to Darth Vader who would threaten the fledgling Alliance once more with the spectre of the Empire rising. Not to be outdone, **Isoad Asimov** would write what would ultimately be his swansong, the final entry in his grand saga, **FORWARD THE FOUNDATION**. On the other side of the spectrum, scientist **Alan Lightman** would pen a small but beautiful book on the nature of time and humanity, **EINSTEIN'S DREAMS**. The book imagines what visions danced through the head of the world's most famous physicist as he was developing his Theory of Relativity.



Sci-fi terrific picks!

SNOW CRASH



NEAL STEPHENSON

Neal Stephenson is not a writer for the casual reader. His books are long, intensely detailed, adventures that combine history, science, and art to develop ideas in ways that leave heads spinning. Fellow author Charles Yu said of Stephenson, "It's a fact: a copy of CRYPTONOMICON has more information per unit volume than any other object in this universe. Any place that a copy of the book exists is, at that moment, the most information-rich region of space-time in the universe."

But Stephenson is, much like William Gibson, one of the most important writers on the scene today. His first two genre novels, SNOW CRASH and CRYPTONOMICON, could vaguely be called Cyberpunk, dealing with information systems and virtual reality/internet hybrids. But that would be incredibly limiting. His "Baroque Cycle" of novels focuses on characters during the 17th and 18th centuries as science is burgeoning, but contains enough tried and true elements to be considered Sci-Fi. Finishing a Stephenson novel is a satisfying and mind-opening experience.

- SHADOW & CLAW and SWORD & CITADEL

Gene Wolfe

THE BOOK OF THE NEW SUN series begins in the far future as our sun dies and a tortured immortal human begins a grand journey.

- THE GUNS OF THE SOUTH:

Harry Turtledove

The master of alternate history spins a fantastic yarn about a white power group that travels back in time to supply the American Confederacy with superior weapons in an attempt to change the outcome of the U.S. Civil War.

- THE HEMINGWAY HOAX:

Joe Haldeman

The FOREVER WAR author pens a short story about Ernest Hemingway, fake manuscripts, parallel universes, and time travel. Enjoy.

- THE PRESTIGE:

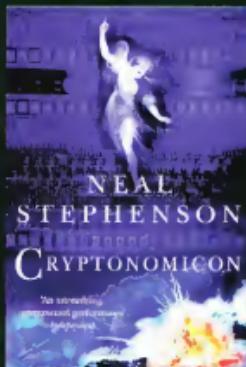
Christopher Priest

Rival magicians employ ingenuity and a little bit of teleportation (courtesy of a fictionalized Nikola Tesla) to outdo one another. Was the source material for Christopher Nolan's (DARK KNIGHT Trilogy) film starring Christian Bale and Hugh Jackman.

- THE NIGHT'S DAWN trilogy:

Peter F. Hamilton

Beginning with THE REALITY DYSFUNCTION, Hamilton tells a sprawling galactic epic in which mankind fights for its survival against an infection where souls of deceased baddies (like Al Capone) are possessing new human hosts.



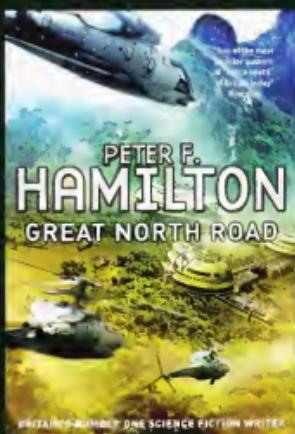
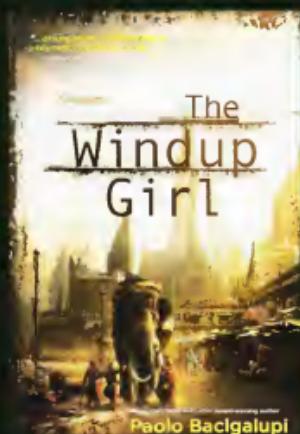
The Old Man and The Galaxy

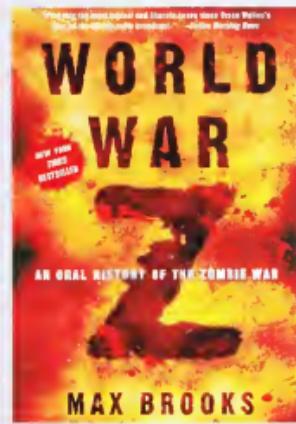
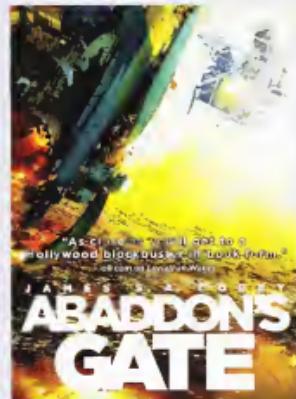
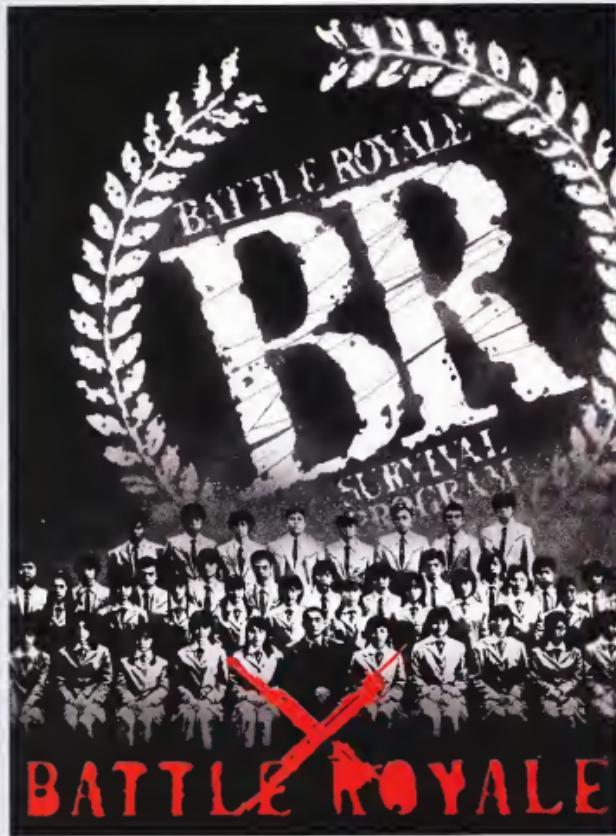
Sci-Fi in the Here and Now

In April of 2012, Glenn Harlan Reynolds wrote in **POPULAR MECHANICS** that, "The future isn't what it used to be. And neither is science fiction. While books about space exploration and robots once inspired young people to become scientists and engineers... in recent decades the field has become dominated by escapist fantasies and depressing dystopias." With the rise of Harry Potter and the **GAME OF THRONES** series, fantasy has invaded the public psyche in a big way. Major awards for which fantasy and Sci-Fi compete have been dominated by the fantasy entrants. **THE HUNGER GAMES** has popularized the dystopian, **LORD OF THE FLIES** type of story, but lacks the social intelligence and cutting edge that made its predecessors, like Koushun Takami's **BATTLE ROYALE**, poignant and memorable. Popular Sci-Fi has—in large part—adopted elements of its genre kin to become more science fantasy, like Jo Walton's excellent Hugo and Nebula Award winning **AMONG OTHERS**, which combines classic Sci-Fi literature with magical elements.

Reynolds is joined by many others in constant refrain, noting that Sci-Fi has ceased to innovate, that it doesn't exceed the boundaries of imagination like it used to. Edgar Rice Burroughs had conceived of radar and TV years before they were even gleams in an engineer's eye. Jules Verne predicted the nature and method of space travel a century in advance. William Gibson's **NEUROMANCER** conceived of the Internet—along with advanced applications, some just now beginning to develop—in 1984. In his 2003 novel, **PATTERN RECOGNITION**, he talks about the Echelon Program used by the NSA to capture emails and phone calls from enemy states. He warned of its uses being turned inward to monitor citizens, a notion that may have seemed paranoid until the recent developments of the NSA spying scandal. Neal Stephenson's **SNOW CRASH** predicted a social networking culture 11 years before MySpace was launched. Even the various iterations of **STAR TREK** TV shows have conceived of tech like MP3 players, tablets, and subcutaneous hypodermic injectors!

But rumors of Sci-Fi's demise have been greatly exaggerated. While it may not be the Nostradamus it once was, good old-fashioned Sci-Fi is still alive and well. William Gibson has continued his ways by imagining new tech and its ability to connect people like no one else can. His 2007 book **SPOOK COUNTRY** takes the idea of locative art and advertising, as well as the information web and how it affects the general





WORLD WAR Z, credited along with SHAUN OF THE DEAD for kicking off the current zombie phenomenon, reads more like a work of great literature than a pulpy horror novel. It doesn't matter if you're sick of zombies or not, or if you didn't like the movie—the book is a masterpiece. Read it.

psyche, and applies them in ways that are just now at the very early stages of practical implementation. While his settings have gradually become more contemporary and less abstract, his ideas and their applications are as fresh as ever.

Neal Stephenson's ANATHEM and Peter Hamilton's GREAT NORTH ROAD are massive tomes that apply the latest in quantum/particle physics and human modification to tell giant interplanetary epics. Just this year Orson Scott Card has added to his ENDER'S GAME prequel series with EARTH AFIRE, while James S.A. Corey (a pseudonym used by a pair of writers) adds to their EXPANSE space opera with the third in the series, ABADDON'S GATE. Even GAME OF THRONES author George R.R. Martin edited a collection called OLD MARS. The book brings together new stories from great Sci-Fi authors like Michael Moorcock, Joe R. Lansdale, and the aforementioned team of James S.A. Corey, to spin Golden Age-inspired yarns about a more adventurous, more mythical Mars in the vein of Burroughs JOHN CARTER.

While it may not be another Golden Age, there is still plenty out there for Sci-Fi aficionados to love. And only time will tell if the present day prognostications pan out. Either way, there's a huge library of classic and contemporary Sci-Fi out there to be enjoyed.

Sci-terrific Picks!

• SPIN:

Robert Charles Wilson

The earth is enclosed in a sphere, keeping time moving at one speed while the rest of the universe ages much quicker with potentially devastating consequences.

• THE COMPANY OF THE DEAD:

David Kowalski

Time travelers fight to correct history after the Titanic is prevented from sinking and earth's future is devastatingly affected.

• ROBOPCALYPSE:

Daniel H. Wilson

Steven Spielberg is looking to turn this tale of humanity's remnants fighting back against an all-controlling sentient AI and its armies into his next film.

• THE LIVES OF TAO and THE DEATHS OF TAO:

Wesley Chu

Aliens invade human minds and shape our history in order to win an ancient, galactic war and get home.

• BLINDSIGHT:

Peter Watts

Humanity detects an alien craft in earth's orbit and investigates at great cost.

• ALTERED CARBON:

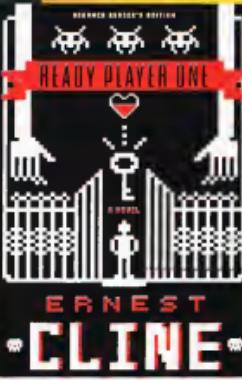
Richard Morgan (Kovacs Series)

Dashiell Hammett meets William Gibson in what can best be described as a hard boiled, noir, cyberpunk novel following ex-military private eye Takeshi Kovacs. CARBON opens one of contemporary Sci-Fi's most excellent series.

Stories of Your Life and Others TED CHIANG

BERNER'S EDITION

READY PLAYER ONE



Jan Scalzi's OLD MAN'S WAR series takes the minds of senior citizens and places them in new, battle-ready bodies as they traverse the galaxy fighting mankind's greatest threats. Balancing humor and poignancy Scalzi has established himself as one of the new millennium's most original talents. While the short story isn't as prominent as it once was, Ted Chiang's 4 Hugo Awards, 3 Nebula Awards, and 3 Locus Awards show that Sci-Fi in smaller packages can still be powerful in the right hands. Big concepts blend with genuinely touching moments. Ernest Cline's READY PLAYER ONE is like a literary candy shop. The story revolves around a massive, virtual reality scavenger hunt worth billions of dollars and those who undertake the challenge. The story is a love letter to nerd culture, weaving everything from Monty Python and Dungeons & Dragons to 80s music and Ultraman into a fast-paced, cyberpunk narrative. While it's not Asimov's FOUNDATION, it is absolutely one of the most enjoyable reads a dyed-in-the-wool geek can have.



WATCHMEN



THE DR. MANHATTAN PROJECTS

Comics' Modern Era and the Deconstruction of Superheroes

The Bronze Age of comics came to an abrupt end in 1985. Among the literary events that caused this shift were DC's **CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS**, which killed multiple DC Universe characters for the first time and altered the overall timeline; and the publication of Alan Moore's pivotal and Hugo Award-winning graphic novel **WATCHMEN**—often the only comic book on larger canonical lists of great twentieth century works. Also published in 1985 was Frank Miller's gruff take on Batman's future, **THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS**. Both **WATCHMEN** and **DARK KNIGHT RETURNS** marked the dawning of a patently non-Golden Age attitude towards heroes: that they might not be any more noble than regular people, that their fights might end in as much blood as any gang war on the street. Writers were no longer introducing characters to inspire the public, but parodying existing stereotypes as commentary on society and its ideals.

In the 90s and early 2000s, creators continued to root their stories in satire and to deconstruct superheroes in various ways that exposed their flaws and stripped them of their "perfect" status in Todd McFarlane's **SPAWN**, Mark Millar's **WANTED** and **KICK-ASS**, and the ironies of Kurt Busiek's **ASTRO CITY** and Robert Kirkman's **INVINCIBLE**. Today, independent imprints such as Image have commandeered a large percentage of the comic book market, forcing the veterans of DC and Marvel to consistently reboot or reimagine their own long-established universes. Since DC's New 52 initiative, the publisher has been focused largely on world-building; and Marvel's insistence on streamlining titles with its popular cinematic universe has led to cosmic, multiple-planet-spanning events like **INFINITY**.

But great comic book Sci-Fi is by no means limited to superheroism. Landmark titles like Warren Ellis's **TRANSMETROPOLITAN**, Brian K. Vaughan's **Y: THE LAST MAN**, and Grant Morrison's **INVISIBLES**, as well as current titles like Jonathan Hickman's **MANHATTAN PROJECTS** and Brian Wood's **THE MASSIVE**, prove that the paneled page can be home to all of Science Fiction's themes—from technology and atom-splitting to UFOs and the apocalypse. You might even say that the visual aspect of comics allows them to explore these themes in ways that writers of traditional stories and novels can only imagine.

HICKMAN-CHEUNG-MORALES-PONZIO
INFINITY
PART ONE OF SIX



More Sci-terrific Picks! **V FOR VENDETTA:** Alan Moore. **BATMAN: YEAR ONE** and **SIN CITY:** Frank Miller. **X-MEN:** Chris Claremont. **DOOM PATROL** and **ALL-STAR SUPERMAN:** Grant Morrison. **THE ULTIMATES** and **CIVIL WAR:** Mark Millar. **STAR MAN:** James Robinson. **PLANETARY** and **GLOBAL FREQUENCY:** Warren Ellis. **GREEN LANTERN:** Geoff Johns. **THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN:** Matt Fraction. **FANTASTIC FOUR:** Jonathan Hickman. **SAGA:** Brian K. Vaughan.

FM'S SCI-FI GUY

by Ed Blair

No piece about the history of Science Fiction literature would be complete without mentioning its number one fanboy: Forrest J Ackerman. While he will forever be known as the founding editor of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, his contributions

to the world of Sci-Fi are equally as impressive. In fact, despite being associated with monster films like DRACULA and FRANKENSTEIN (a film he would stridently argue is more Sci-Fi than gothic horror), it was Science Fiction that was his greatest love. As a young boy, Forry would first see ONE GLORIOUS DAY and later, Fritz Lang's silent film METROPOLIS and its technology-driven visions of the future. Lang's film would become his favorite of all time and would set the young boy on a path towards becoming one of the genre's most vocal advocates.

Aside from being a great fan of Science Fiction literature and pulps like *Amazing Stories* and *Astounding Science Fiction*, Forry was not content to simply be a consumer of the genre. At age thirteen he would found The Boys' Scientifiction Club. At nineteen, he helped to establish the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, a group that would meet regularly at Clifton's Cafeteria in downtown LA and included members like Ray Harryhausen, Ray Bradbury, and Robert Heinlein. The organization is the longest running Science Fiction fan group in history and boasts an impressive members list, including the likes of RINGWORLD author Larry Niven. At 22, Forry would inadvertently start the cosplay movement when he and friend Myrtle R. Douglas decided to dress up as citizens of the future for the first World Science Fiction Convention in New York. They were the only pair to come in character. The following year, hundreds showed up in costume. Today, dressing in character for fan conventions is expected.

But Forry was just warming up. He lent Ray Bradbury the money to get his first works published. Ray was always quick to say, "Without Forry Ackerman, there would be no Ray Bradbury." Forry was a literary

agent for Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, L. Ron Hubbard, Frederik Pohl, and a great many others, selling their stories to all manner of magazines, including a young publisher named Jim Warren, with whom Forry would go on to co-found *Famous Monsters*. He was central in organizing the campaign to keep Science Fiction alive in post-war Germany when it was deemed to have no cultural value and was on the verge of being banned.

In 1954, while driving through Los Angeles, Forry heard a commercial for a fantastic new radio unit called a Hi-Fi. Like a bolt from Zeus himself, Forry's mind exploded. A word came to him, a word that had always been there but had just needed the right motivation to come forward: *Sci-Fi*. It was a term that would go on to define him, to cause him great personal troubles, and elevate him to a rarefied air. Shortly thereafter he used the term in a speech at UCLA, and it caught fire. The term would cause great debate amongst fans and authors alike. Forry's most vocal critic, author Harlan Ellison (who coarsely referred to the term as sounding like crickets mating) would argue until Forry's dying day that the term cheapened the work, making it sound unsophisticated and pedestrian. Forry defended the term, saying it was meant to be an umbrella that welcomed all, falling into line with Forry's utopian worldview.

Regardless, Forry would champion Sci-Fi until his dying day. He was given the moniker Mr. Sci-Fi. The word adorned his license plate, was the last thing he said every night before he went to bed, was his final word to his fans, and is even engraved on his memorial at Forest Lawn Memorial Park outside of Los Angeles. His plaque reads, in true Forry fashion, "Sci-Fi was my high."





FORREST J ACKERMAN
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Aside from containing Farry's thoughts on paying taxes ("Blood Money") the above check shows one of his most endearing legacies—his Ackermansian phone number: 323-MOON-FAN.



ABOVE RIGHT: Farry (bottom row left) and Ray Bradbury (bottom row right) were amongst the many who regularly attended LASFS meetings at Clifton's, partially because, "they had free Limeade." Below: Farry's Lincoln sporting his famous phrase. RIGHT: The mag that called out to him, "Take me home little boy and you will love me!" And did he ever.





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